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RELIGIOUS RITE AS SYMBOL

M. Amaladoss

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RELIGIOUS WORSHIP OF INDIA

Mathew Nelluvely

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The Meeting of Religions

CULTIC SYMBOLISM

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Editorial

The age of 'enlightenment' and of 'reason' is now past. Today people are rather unmoved by theoretical interpretations of ideas and issues. Those who promoted the cult of reason created an impression that people can prove anything they want with clever reasoning. So there is a strong suspicion that often theoretical reasoning is nothing more than building up a world of ideas, or just a word game, in which if the rules of the game are observed strange conclusions that have very little relation to life and reality may be arrived at. People now ascribe greater value and meaning to what touches their life in the concrete. What matter in religion are not creeds, dogmatic definitions and theological interpretations but living faith and actual experience of the transcendent Reality immediately present in the life of man. This may be the reason why people are going back to the direct experience of the divine reality in worship and religious symbolism, in which man becomes directly conscious of the divine presence.

But cultic symbolism itself is a complex subject. It embraces everything from blind and superstitious practices of magic to the rationally thought-out and logically-organized ceremonies of a liturgical celebration. An exhaustive treatment of the subject is impossible in a single issue of a theological journal. This number of *Jeevadhara* aims at dealing with a few topics relevant to the theme from a general point of view with emphasis on the interreligious aspect of it. The more specifically theological problems are reserved for later discussions.

A proper understanding of the cultic rite and the symbolism involved in it is basic to this study. M. Amaladoss in his article "Religious Rites as Symbol" deals with a general and basic analysis of religious rite. I follow him with a specific examination of the religious and psychological meanings of symbolism and worship in the religions of the world today. Any study of a religious phenomenon like symbolism and cult must ask what they actually mean now in the consciousness of people.

An examination of the terms used, in this respect, like "puja". "yajna" and "liturgy", can be very helpful in understanding what worship and rite meant to people in the past, who borrowed them from other traditions, and modified them as historical contexts changed and new situations arose. K. Luke analyzes and traces the linguistic relationships of one specific term in this respect, 'puja', the Sanskrit word often used to indicate sacrifice. He shows that this word had an almost universal meaning. the offerings made to honourable guests. Transferred to the religious field it implied that the Deity was experienced as the honoured guest present to the sacrificer. It is not claimed that etymological analysis is an adequate or primary means of dealing with religious phenomenon. But it is evidently one of the tools that comparative religionists cannot afford to neglect.

Two specific examples of religious worship are included in this number by way of exemplification. Paul Kadicheeni examines the theological perspectives of Theodore of Mopsuestia regarding the Sacraments. His views were the inspiration for the liturgical theology of the Chaldean tradition. Mathew Nelluvely studies the cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indian tradition and its implications.

The more conscious and deliberate people become regarding the meaning and purpose of their liturgical symbolism, the greater will be the possibility of their avoiding superstition and blind dogmatism in cult and of identifying themselves with the ideals that are symbolically expressed.

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Religious Rite as Symbol

Inter-religious dialogue usually restricts itself to an exchange of views on the creeds or belief-systems of the participants, occasionally venturing into a theological discussion. In rare cases it might reach the level of a sharing of religious experiences and even lead to common prayer. But we rarely see anyone interested in the rituals of his partner in dialogue. This is as surprising as it is revelatory: surprising, because rites are more fundamental than beliefs; revelatory, because it indicates a certain attitude to ritual. There are religions without a developed doctrinal system or theology, but there is hardly a religion which does not find expression in ritual. Rituals are direct, lived expressions of basic religious sentiment, unspoilt by sophisticated conceptual speculation. They offer a more profound and accurate insight into the nature of this sentiment and of the community which expresses itself through them. Hence the neglect of ritual in dialogue is unfortunate. One reason for it may be the modern intellectual's mistrust of rites.¹ He looks upon them as primitive, often magical, and suited to less developed people. Such a view of ritual is not only unfortunate but wrong. This may be one of the reasons why dialogue remains the activity of an intellectually articulate *élite*. An attempt is made here to help in clearing ritual of this atmosphere of suspicion that hangs over it. In the following pages no defence of ritual is intended.² A few points are offered that may help in the analysis and understanding of the structure and functioning of the rite.

1. See Juan Luis Segundo, *The Sacraments Today* (New York, 1974), p. 25: "Jesus wants signs, not rites". As if signs and rites can be opposed! The tendency to assign ritual to an inferior stage of religious development is common also in Hinduism. But this opposition in Hinduism is directed not to rite as sign, but to it as a magical means of procuring earthly or heavenly rewards.

2. For a defence of ritual see Roger Grainger, *The Language of the Rite* (London, 1974); Mary Douglas, "The Contempt of Ritual", *New Blackfriars* 49 (1968), pp. 475-82; 528-535.

Though much of what is said is applicable to any sort of ritual, attention is restricted to rituals in a religious context. To begin with a working description of a religious rite, is that it is *a symbolic action of a community in a religious context*. An explanation of this description gives us an idea of the nature of the rite.

A rite is a *symbolic action*. Speaking about symbols in a ritual context, attention is often restricted to the material objects that figure in it. Pages have been written on the symbolism of water, how it is at once destructive and creative etc. It is often forgotten that water rarely figures by itself in a religious context. It is always one element of a gesture like washing, sprinkling, pouring out. The emphasis is not on the material object, water, but on the use made of it, washing, for instance. This shift in emphasis leads inevitably to a restriction in the range of meaning that water may have when it is taken by itself. The point here is that water is not a symbol on its own. When we consider a rite like that of washing with water our attention must be given to the gesture of washing and its specific meaning in the religious context in which it figures. Sometimes this is a preparatory rite of purification. At other times it adds a purificatory dimension to the rite of initiation as, for example, in Christian Baptism. One can go on to argue that there is hardly any religious symbol, thing or word, that is significant in itself. It is usually an element in an action expressive of an attitude, even when that action is completely mental. However this is beside the point here.

The opposite tendency is to regard the rite as merely an illustration that accompanies a formula or formal statement. It is a temptation of those who believe that being intellectual means affecting contempt for everything that concerns the body. It may also be due to a vague apprehension that all ritual is magical. The basis of this view is a dualistic approach that sees an absolute rupture between the spiritual and the temporal, the soul and the body. We should understand, however, that the formula is as symbolic as a ritual action. Both are media for the communication of meaning. The preference of one to the other is not necessarily a reflection on the nature or suitability of the medium but depends upon philosophical presuppositions.

Though ritual is action, it is not just any type of action. It is, as we have seen, symbolic action. One can wash oneself with the purpose of purifying oneself from the dust and sweat of the day. No one would consider such washing a ritual. It becomes a ritual when the principal aim of the gesture is not bodily cleanliness but interior (spiritual) purity, even when this does not go beyond ritual purity. External purification becomes the symbol of internal purification. For a believer this interior purity is not merely symbolized but is actually effected. This is a dimension of faith. While we are not directly concerned with it here, it must be kept in mind. Let us concentrate on the symbolic dimension of ritual. The very idea of purification (spiritual) is thinkable only with reference to the gesture of bodily purification. It cannot be thought of, or spoken of, independently of this gesture, which when done, enables a person to experience a purification, though symbolically, in some way and to live it. It is the closest one can come to the experience in a human way. The gesture in itself, without the dimension of further meaning, would be empty. A mere affirmation of meaning without the gesture would be disembodied and abstract. The symbolic action brings gesture and meaning together and gives birth to a living, human experience. It is only when this dimension of meaning is lost and the ritual continues to be gone through in a religious context that it becomes magic.

If a symbolic action conveys a meaning, then that meaning must be intelligible to all those who perceive the action. It becomes in this way a means of communication. It conveys a significance not only to the individual who undergoes the rite but to all those who share in the 'faith' context. The ritual action is not merely a phenomenon of communication or a dramatic performance which seeks to convey a meaning or a message to the spectators. As a matter of fact there are no spectators; all are participants. When a ritual is represented on the stage nothing happens. A meaning alone is communicated. It is not effected, actualized, lived. The gesture is a symbol but not a symbolic action. The ritual as symbolic action is not just a means of conveying an idea.

Ritual lies somewhere between a gesture of communication and effect-oriented action. It has been compared to the activity

of play. Others have compared it to artistic creation. A natural term, 'expression', is perhaps best. It is creative because it embodies a meaning in the medium of word, gesture, action and material object. It is self-manifesting because it visibilizes the creator's belief and its significance to him. It is self-involving, because this creation is not objectified in a thing outside oneself but is given form and visibility in one's own body (gesture), helped by word and thing. It is an experience because it is not merely an abstract statement of meaning but a lived affirmation of it. All these aspects of ritual may be summed up as expression or, better still, self-expression.³

Ritual has always some reference to a community. It is clear that here we are making an *a-posteriori* idescription of a fact. An individual may choose to create his own religion and its rituals, but religious ritual as we know it is always communitarian. Even if it is performed by an individual alone its significance is determined by the cultural and religious context of a community. Every symbol system, whatever be its medium, linguistic, pictorial, gestural or tonal, is always open to another. There is no symbol without communication and no communication is possible without some basis in community, whether it be common experience or convention.⁴

3. For the preceding section see A. J. Greimas, "Conditions d'une Sémiologie du monde naturel", *Langage* 10 (1968), pp. 3-35; Julia Kristeva, "Le geste, pratique on communication?", *Langage* 10 (1968), pp. 48-64; Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools*. (Cambridge USA, 1969); J. Pieper, *In Tune with the world: a Theory of Festivity* (New York; 1969); Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play* (London, 1965); Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God* (New York, 1970); Antoine Vergote, "Symbolic Gestures and Actions in the Liturgy", *Concilium* 2, 27 (1971), pp. 40-52; Edward A. Fischer, "Ritual as communication", *Worship* 45 (1971), pp. 58-72.

4. Claude Levi-Strauss, "Introduction a l'Oeuvre de Marcel Mauss", *Sociologie et anthropologie* by M. Mauss. (Paris, 1968); T. T. Patterson, "Emotive Rituals in Industrial Organisms", *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*- Series 8 - number 772 (1966)

Apart from this implicit reference to a community, religious ritual in its normal form is always the action of a community. It is a collective action of a group of believers. It is always connected with the life of the community, either in itself or in relation to an individual. A rite of initiation, for example, is the admission by the community of a new member. This action might imply aspects like purification and new life for the member, but this is part of the process of integration. It is not simply the material addition of another member to the group. The community is aware of being a spiritual fellowship and the new member, in joining it, is really passing from a state of exclusion to one of inclusion which may be interpreted as a passage from death to life, from darkness to light.⁵ This passage, as well as the states and stages preceeding and succeeding it are lived through symbolic gestures that involve the whole community. Thus the ritual becomes the symbolic self-expression of the community. Every important stage in the life of the individual and of the community is similarly expressed and celebrated ritually.⁶

If every religious ritual is described as a symbolic action of the community and at the same time characterized as its living self-expression, one of the elements symbolized by the ritual is the community itself. Any form of symbolic self-expression is always a manifestation, through a chosen medium, of one or other aspect of the self involved in the action. This is true of all forms of art. This is true also of the rite. The structure of the community, the division of roles, its self-understanding, its belief and value system – all these will be manifested in some way in the ritual action. From a study of the ritual one can learn a lot about the community that celebrates it. Three aspects of this knowledge are worth mentioning.

At a deep level the ritual visibilizes the belief-system of the community. This system has a once-for-all character about it. It

5. cf. Mircea Eliads *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (New York, 1958)

6. cf. A. Van Gennap, *The Rites of Passage* (London, 1960)

7. cf. Emile [Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London, 1915)

is accepted by the community as normative. It does not create it but actualizes it through reenacting. The ritual structure is always referred back to a founder or a primordial time when the group was constituted as a believing community. What comes afterwards is tradition, and participation, not creation. This is the basic significance of a rite, which can be found out by careful study. Religious faith is a commitment to this meaning. Without this commitment the rite would be an empty gesture and nothing more; it may be a dramatic performance or it may fulfil emotional needs, but it would not be a religious rite.

The belief-system finds expression in a symbol-system. These two systems constitute a structure of duality-in-unity. The belief cannot be perceived and expressed except through some symbol, but it need not be this particular symbol. The symbol system, therefore, presents a variable, and the variation may be induced by conditions both of space and time in so far as they are the co-ordinates in which cultural transformations or variations occur. One can look at this at a purely phenomenological level. One can observe how the idea of a new birth has been communicated through a variety of symbols in the initiation rites of different religions. One can also try to identify a certain structure that underlies these variations. For example, the sociologist Mary Douglas⁸, using co-ordinates that represent evolution in the area of social control and means of communication proposed by Basil Bernstein⁹, has analysed and typed systems of social structure from primitive to professional through classical and romantic. The importance given to ritual itself and the kind of ritual used will vary from one type to another. The rite will ultimately be in the image of the society-type which celebrates it. The kind of symbols used, the values affirmed, the differentiation of roles assigned to the members of the community, the form of interpersonal relationship promoted, and the way one relates to God and the world, will vary according to the nature of the community whose self-expression they are. A belief-system

8. See her *Natural Symbols* (Pelican, 1973).

9. Basil Bernstein, "A Socio-Linguistic Approach to Socialisation" xx in J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (ed.), *Directions in Socio-Linguistics* (New York, 1970)

acquires a variety of symbolic expressions. A rite mediates to us not only the belief-system of the community but also its internal structure and functioning. One can even construct a homology between societal and ritual structure. In practice, however, the ritual structure is perhaps, always one step behind the societal structure because in the realm of religion tradition is a strong conservative force. The reason is a fear, even if only unconscious, that any change in the symbol might involve one in the belief which it expresses.

There is a further element which also contributes to making any strict homology between ritual and societal structure go awry. A rite does not aim at being an expression of a community as it is but as it wants to be. It is an expression not of its real self, but its ideal self. This has been called the element of anti-structure in ritual.¹⁰ The celebration of community always refers either back or forwards or both to a golden age. It looks to a time when it was not stratified by unequal, perhaps unjust, economic and social structures. It wishes to create a unity which transcends all sorts of division and discord. When a new member is initiated into the community, for example, what is emphasized is the equality of all in the possession of this new life. The celebration therefore emphasizes rituals of fraternity, of reconciliation, of mutuality, of a breaking down of barriers. In certain cases this might involve a temporary freedom from laws, social taboos, class distinctions. It might even lead to licence and promiscuity.

This element of anti-structure is a source of tension in ritual: tension between the real self and the ideal self, between the community as it would like to be and the community as it is. In expressing itself in ritual gesture a community cannot but communicate, symbolically, its own structure. Otherwise it would be inauthentic, artificial, irrelevant. It would not be a rite at all. It would be a dramatic performance. On the other hand

10. cf. V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (London, 1969); Idem, '“Passages, Margins and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas”, *Worship* 46 (1972, pp. 390-412, 482-492.

the community makes use of this very symbol-system to break out of the structure that has given it birth. This dynamism is ultimately traceable to the belief-system. Therefore the tension between structure and anti-structure is reduceable to the basic duality of belief and symbol. It is only when both are maintained in tension that we have a rite that is living and dynamic.

The rite is never a simple replay of normal life. It is a privileged moment, out-of-the-ordinary, set-apart. A symbolic way of affirming this dimension is to make of the rite a representation of, or a mysteric participation in, a *typical* action that is at once past, present and future, referring back to a primordial time, when the community was first founded, and looking forward to a future consummation, while affirming the possibility of participating in this reality here and now. The rite is the place and means of this encounter and participation. This is lived through a structure of symbolic actions.

The force of the word *symbolic*, when rite was described as symbolic action, begins to be apparent. The community that celebrates it symbolizes itself and the reality in which it is participating through the power of its faith.

Much of what we have been saying about religious ritual is equally applicable to others in a non-religious context. Non-religious rites too are symbolic actions. They do not share the transcendent dimension of meaning that religious rituals usually have given to them by the context of faith in which they are celebrated. All the same they express, through symbol a certain idea of a community and the inter-relations that constitute it. Such expression is itself creative of a community. T. T. Paterson has said, "Rituals are formalized behaviour patterns, methods of communication, verbal and non-verbal, necessary for the establishment of relations among members of a group or between groups". In this process of communication and community-building they respond to psychological needs of all kinds: resolve tensions, provide means of sublimation, offer sources of security etc. The psychological aspect of ritual action is not directly

concerned here but only the fact that psychological functions of ritual are mediated through symbol. A rite can have them because it is a symbolic action.

Religious rituals *qua* rituals can fulfil a psychological function independantly of what religious meaning they do or do not mediate.¹² Every man for his proper personal growth and development needs to feel accepted. A rite of initiation which symbolizes in action a man's integration into the believing community is at the same time indicative of his acceptance in a human community. To an individual who feels guilt, for example, the Christian sacrament of confession mediates pardon and acceptance. To someone who is ill the sacrament of anointing is expressive of the concern of the community for him. In this way religious rituals can also meet the human need for acceptance, support and integration. This is why it can happen that many people, who no longer share the faith of the community and therefore do not commit themselves to the inner meaning of the religious rituals, are still not ready to give up the occasional, if not regular, practice of them. They satisfy a real human need. It is possible to analyse and understand religious ritual purely at this level. Secular rituals may slowly replace religious rituals in this sphere and may meet human needs adequately. but the point here is that religious ritual can have a symbolic function at a purely human level and even in a non-religious context.

The relevance to the study of comparative religion and dialogue of an analysis and understanding of ritual as symbolic action should now be evident. The examples used here have been taken from Christian religious tradition, but the analysis owes nothing specificalay to Christian theology and can, therefore, be used a common tool in investigating ritual of other kinds.

We can even speculate upon the general results of such a comparative study. An analysis of the rituals of a particular re-

12. E. C. Kennedy, "The Contribution of Religious Ritual to Psychological Balance" *Concilium* 2, 7 (1971), pp. 53-58; A. Greeley, Religious Symbolism, Liturgy and Community", *Ibid*, pps 59-69.

ligion in this way will help us to discover the different levels, sociological, for example, and religious, to understand them in the context of the social structure of the society that practises them, to pin-point what really belongs to the realm of faith and to avoid confusing symbol and meaning. Such clarity would certainly obviate a lot of problems in dialogue and promote greater mutual understanding. More pertinently it will restore respect for religious ritual and make it a worthy object of study and dialogue. Theological formulations at a speculative level may not at all correspond to what is being actually lived and experienced. Dialogue at this level can be alienating. For the same reason it can be comfortable, because it is vague and does not challenge or provoke commitment. Ideas are exchanged and discussed, but one is not personally involved. With ritual such alienation is not possible. Either one does not believe in it and it is empty, without content, and this is immediately noticed, or one believes and is deeply committed and one's depth is laid bare. This depth, however, will be visible only to another observer equally committed, even if it be only to his own faith. Only he can discern the deep seriousness, the sincerity of purpose and the authenticity of experience that accompany the celebration of a religious rite. Dialogue at this level can move on to depths inaccessible to mere intellectuals.

A comparative study of rituals playing a similar role in different religions can unearth not merely similarity of patterns at the sociological level, but even a certain community of meaning at the religious level.¹³ The rite of initiation in any religion symbolizes not only integration into a believing community. It also indicates a passage from 'death' to 'life' (new birth), from darkness to light. Even at this level of meaning there is a certain community. There would be a difference at the level of the source of this transformation; the spirit of Christ, the power of Shiva or the grace of Krishna. This does not mean that this difference is minimal or not important. On the contrary, being at the centre it qualifies and transforms the meaning of the ritual as a whole. But in a situation of dialogue it is important to realize where the real difference lies.

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13. cf. the works of Eliade and van Gennep cited above.

Symbolism and Cult in World Religions Today

The present renewed interest in liturgy

Today there is renewed interest in cult and symbolism everywhere but with a certain difference: Churches are relatively empty. Respect for traditional religious authorities and reliance on them are declining. Still, the popularity of religious experience and the concern to share it are on the increase. There is a sharp increase in the number of people who go on pilgrimages to sacred places, in every religion. The streets of Rome are thronged with pilgrims who come from all parts of the world. The number of devout Muslims who make the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is their life long desire, has not in any way diminished. Hindus who make their pilgrimage to the jungle abode of Ayyappan at Sabarimala and to other little-known holy places can be counted in hundreds of thousands and millions. People seem to feel that what religion asks one to believe and observe is more concretely experienced in prayerful worship than in theoretical formulations and creeds. There are certain basic dimensions of man's religious worship that are extremely important both in manifesting his spontaneous experience of God and in revealing certain fundamental aspects of his own nature. Besides, there seems to be greater agreement among religions in the ideals of cult and symbolism than in the areas of belief and doctrine which demand more positive analysis and theoretical discussion.

Reconciliation and renewal

In the contemporary renewed interest in worship there is a new mood and attitude that is characteristic of the modern outlook on life itself. In it there is a veiled protest against ideals of traditional worship that stressed the awesome transcendence of the deity and of man's need and total dependence on Him, the "tremendum" and "fascinans" of Rudolf Otto's definition of the Holy. The idea of a holy Being, wholly other and totally removed from man's grasp creates a division in his life,

a place he cannot step into without putting off his sandals. This is the basic reason for the alienation of youth from traditional religions and religious ideas. Similarly, to emphasize the idea that the free human being, responsible for his actions and his destiny, is totally dependent on a transcendent Other appears to be a denial of his autonomy.

On the other hand, man's need for worship is expressed in two analogous sentiments that are very much in evidence today: the desire for conversion and for reconciliation. Contemporary dialogical attitude evinces a willingness to listen to others, to be disturbed and internally changed by what one hears from them and to turn to one's own authentic roots and reality and acknowledge one's own weaknesses and needs. This quest for one's inner authenticity in a way translates, in interioristic and communitarian terms, the traditional idea of transcendence. Similarly a movement towards reconciliation and unity is found everywhere. There is an honest effort to bridge the gap between classes and peoples, colours and cultures. This effort to bring humanity together and get to the basic authenticity of each one, and of the human community as a whole, is a religious phenomenon. Though religion deals with God its purpose and meaning are man and his relation to his ultimate goal. The long dialogues, sit-ins and teach-ins of young people today have very much in common with the assemblies for religious worship. Worship centres in God in order to bring men together in fellowship as His children or as seekers of the ultimate Reality. The *Acts of the Apostles* in describing the liturgical life of the nascent Christian community brings out this element of fellowship as the fundamental aspect of worship: "These (first Christians) remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.... They went as a body to the temple every day, but met in their houses for the breaking of bread." (Acts 2: 42, 46). Faith in God's revelation, prayers and celebration of the Eucharist nourished their fellowship. Though they were faithful to the traditional ritual of the temple, they found its full meaning in meeting together and sharing food in their houses.

Ritual and transcendence

In all religions symbolism and worship arise from certain

basic intuitions of man. On the one hand, he finds himself unique and isolated in the whole universe. He felt like the Vedic sage who said, "Heaven is my father, earth my mother, the space between them was the womb in which I took origin."¹ The rest of nature appears to him threatening and engulfing. In a sense it is the personification of evil, a force beyond his control. The Vedic man called it Vṛtra, the cosmic dragon that hid all the waters and stole all the cows. Evil for him was no mere negation or privation, but the removal of all good under a power beyond his control. The spontaneous reaction to this threatening power of nature is magic, man's wishful thinking that through certain mechanical means he can bring this alien force under his control and manipulate it. Ancient writings abound in magical formulas and rites that claim to bring the hidden forces of nature under control. A refined form of this magical approach is found in the Vedic narrative of the efforts of the gods to find the right sacrificial formula for attaining immortality. They repeatedly failed to arrange the bricks for the sacrificial altar in the right order and number until Prajapati revealed the technique to them.² Religious ritual with its complicated gestures known only to the priests or initiates, and the assurance of stated effects, always appeared to have an element of the magical.

On the other hand, in opposition to the hidden and threatening forces of nature, primitive man had also the idea of a supreme benevolent existence conceived either as one Absolute reality or as a collection of divine beings responsible for the creation and preservation of the world and of man. This transcendental order of reality is the basic insight of religion. Reality stands out against unreality, darkness and death. The origin of the phenomenal world is celebrated as the victory of the Creator, God, over the primeval demon of darkness and chaos. Creating the world, God entered into his own creation. As Mircea Eliade loves to repeat in his works, worship and ritual attempt to recapture and repeat the original irruption of the divine into human history. The original unity of primeval chaos was broken

1 *Rg Veda* I, 164, 33

2 *Satapatha Brahmana*, X, iv, 3

and conquered by the entry of gods into the world. Hence in his continuing struggle against the forces of evil man assumes that the same divine power will be still available to him. Vṛtra once killed by Indra has to be killed again and again. Sacrifice and ritual make available to man the divine power in order that he may re-create the world by his own action. For the Vedic man, the sacrificer holds the whole universe in his own grasp. Soma juice poured out in sacrifice symbolized life and the essence of the whole of creation. Fire that consumed all offering was the figure and representative of all gods.³

All symbolism takes its origin in the ineffable nature of reality, the need to combine transcendence with the future. Reality exceeds man's comprehension and he has to appeal to the transcendent to explain it. Yet, the world is his responsibility and he has to create his own future. Hence religious symbolism is an effort to bridge the gap between the transcendent character of the world and of man's own nature, on the one hand, and his freedom, responsibility and creativity on the other. What he has to make of his own life is something eternal and divine, but he has to build it up from the material things of this world. The first Brahmodya or the Vedic dialogue on the nature of Brahman occurs in a significant and highly symbolic hymn of the first *mandala* of the Ṛgveda. There the poet asks four questions; (1) What is the ultimate limit of this earth? (2) What is the navel of the universe? (3) What is the seed of the cosmic horse? (4) What is the ultimate abode of speech? The answers to these questions explain the basic symbolism of cultic ritual: (1) This altar is the ultimate limit of this earth. (2) this sacrifice is the navel of the universe. (3) Soma is the *semen* of the cosmic horse, the secret of creativity in the world. (4) Brahman is the ultimate abode of speech. If it is remembered that these questions and their answers are presented in the context of the morning sacrifice the meaning of the answers appears clear: This altar that transforms material things into symbols of eternal realities is the border that divides the terrestrial and the celestial, the material and the spiritual. The sacrifice offered on it presents

3 *Rg Veda*, I, 1

4 *Rg Veda* I, 164, 34-35

a new focal point for the cosmic vision of man. The soma, which is the essence extracted from herbs, the sap of nature, when offered in sacrifice is the beginning of a new creation, a spiritual re-creation of all things. The ultimate goal to which these sacrificial formulas and hymns are directed is Brahman, the absolute Reality.

Sacrifice and ritual give man a share in the shaping of his own future. He is not passively pushed into eternity. He is asked to create his own future. As Pierre Charles says in his *Prayer of All Things*, eternal life is not presented to us as an entertainment hall, where people are permitted to watch in silence items presented by other people, but a banquet. in which people talk, eat and enjoy themselves at their ease in the company of their friends.

Newness of worship

Cultic symbolism means renewal and growth. It is not mere newness in time (Gk *neos*), something different coming in the place of the old, but a newness in quality (Gk *kainos*), something renewed and transformed. As the Greek word *anóthen* used in this connection indicates, it is something made anew or made from on high. The worshipper realizes that in the cultic celebration the divine enters again into the world and produces a new heaven and a new earth for the sake of the reborn man. In the Vedic sacrifice since Agni is god and the representative of all gods, everything offered in fire becomes divine. Here gods generally appear in pairs Agni and Indra, Mitra and Varuna, Siva and Sakti, Vishnu and Lakshmi, showing the male and female, interior and exterior aspects. Indra for example who conquered Vrtra and rules and shows mighty works in the skies is the female principle of exteriority. The interioristic and immanent aspect to which sacrificial symbol points is represented by Agni. Everything is gathered back into the authentic centre of reality. Similarly in the Agamic tradition the priest who consecrates the statue made out of wood, metal or stone proclaims that the statue is no longer mere metal or stone but the presence of the deity, who chooses to dwell in the midst of his people and share their life. The things offered to the deity as *puja* are accepted by him in their essence. The sacrifice in a way extrac-

their spiritual essence from them, unites it with his own spirit and offers this to the god to be one with him. Thus the world represented by the offerings and the man who offers them enters a new level of existence.

This is also the fundamental idea of the Incarnation in Christianity. The Son of God becoming man and dwelling in the midst of men has made the whole of humanity and the universe, in a sense, his own body. [As Vatican Council II says in its document on the Church in the Modern World, "by his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man."⁵ The divine plan of salvation is bringing everything together under the headship of Christ.⁶ Through Christ who died and rose again from the dead each Christian is symbolized as dying, being buried and rising again through the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism.⁷ With the Son of God who conquered death through his resurrection humanity itself has risen from the dead.⁸ Christian worship is centred in this mystery of the resurrection of Christ which symbolizes and stands for the salvation of all humanity.

Nature, rite and symbolism

In this reawakening and renewing of humanity in encounter with the divine in worship, different religions are not proposing something arbitrary and artificial, but following the harmonies and rhythms of nature itself. Man's life resembles nature. The universe itself is governed by periodicity, with stages and transitions, movements forwards and periods of relative inactivity. Nature slumbers or even dies in winter, but is reborn and rejuvenated in Spring. Vedic man thought that when the sun set it went back into the womb of the cosmic mother and was given birth to again in the morning. Man was acutely aware of time which characterises the whole of nature. Passing from day to day, month to month, season to season and year to year had some sacred significance. He spontaneously instituted daily morning sacrifices, full moon and new moon ceremonies, special festivals for the solstices and equinoxes and solemn rites for the closing of the

5 *Gaudium et Spes* n. 22

7 *Rom.* 6, 3-7

6 *Eph.* 1, 9

8 *Col.* 3, 1

year and the welcoming of the new year. Time rushes on and in its course corrodes the existence of man. The symbolism of ritual seeks to arrest this corrosion and to cope with the terror of time. Symbolic time shows forth the image of eternity. Worship seeks to recreate the "Great time" of the past by re-living the sacred time. Myth that recalls the original irruption of the divine into time and human history holds up a model mode of being in the world. Religious experience, especially experience of the beginnings when time emerged from divine creativity allows man continually to regenerate time. For this reason the myth of the death and resurrection of the deity gained great importance in the history of worship.

Though both Judaism and Christianity had a linear conception of time and history, and considered creation, fall and redemption as once-and-for-all events, the cyclic conception of time as a reflection of eternity was not absent from their view. The very mythical presentation of creation as a six-day event with the seventh day set apart for rest and celebration, held it up as a model for the weekly worship of God and observance of the Sabbath. God's work of creation itself is conceived as a first instalment in a covenant with man who has to fulfil his part so that God may continue to go ahead and perfect the project he has initiated. Hence the eschatological fulfilment that is promised is in fact a going back to the original design. The story of creation in the Bible appears as the background for the work of salvation that has to be continued down the ages with regard to each individual, in every age, and every day of his life. Hence as Mircea Eliade says, "Christianity by the very fact it is a religion has had to preserve at least one mythical attitude toward liturgical time, that is, the rejection of profane time and the recovery of the Great Time, *illud tempus* of the beginnings"⁹ Liturgical time is circular time. In fact the linear concept of the plan of God to be realized in the case of time-bound humanity and of individual human beings, is only one aspect of the rhythmic and cyclic manifestation of eternity in finite created existence.

9 *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1967, p. 30

The specific approach of each religion to time may be different, but the dialectic tension between time and eternity in liturgical worship is present in all. Hinduism considers time unreal by the side of the immutable reality of the Absolute, and its goal is to annul time in favour of eternity. But the total reality of the sacred is achieved only in the cultic celebration where the material and temporal appear a mere shadow. The Persians ascribed value and reality to the future; but that prophetic future has to be realized by working on the present. Confucianism placed the emphasis on the past and wanted to perpetuate it. But this can be accomplished only if the past is actualized in the present. Eschatologically-oriented Christianity waiting for the second coming of Christ has constantly to recall and proclaim the great deeds of God in the past beginning with creation and culminating in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the Christ-event.¹⁰

Symbolism and worship

In man's search for the eternal in the temporal, symbolism becomes, as the Vedic sage found, the point of man's passage to the transcendent order in worship, the unifying focus of all the universe and the door to the vision of Absolute Reality.¹¹ To realize this the symbol must have a dual aspect: it must be fully human, the expression of man's search for his ultimate meaning, and at the same time have the stamp of God's self-disclosure to man.

Etymologically 'symbol' means throwing together, matching, comparing especially material things, and originally it meant matching two halves of a thing. In medieval times symbolism was given a highly spiritual meaning. According to Hugo of St. Victor, it is the comparison of the visible forms showing forth the invisible. Religious creeds were called symbols either because they were collections of articles of faith, or because they were

10 cf. Marianne H. Micks. *The Future Present, The Phenomenon of Christian Worship*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1970

11 *Rg Veda* I, 164

12 "Two Temptations" *Worship* 37 (1962) 11-21

formed by a comparison of ideas provided by different sources. Symbols are not mere images, which are representations faithfully imitating the things they represent. They are also different from gestures which express or embody meaning as a visible extension of the person, with the immediacy of a person-to-person relationship. Symbols relate more to the total reality in which persons are united. Every symbol is a sign since it signifies something else, but every sign is not a symbol. Smoke is a sign of fire but not a symbol. A symbol in some manner contains the reality of that which it signifies though it is only an approximation to it and not a definition. For this very reason symbols have to be fully human expressing man's aspirations, needs and preoccupation and at the same time contain a certain guarantee of God, to whose worship they tend.

Hence about the time of the opening of Vatican Council II Louis Bouyer warned liturgists against two dangers: taking refuge in an immobile traditionalism, in which liturgy would petrify, and rejecting altogether the domain of the sacred, the force of tradition and the sense of reverence.

The human aspect of the religious symbol

When liturgy is conceived as the mechanical performance of a ritual, which has lost meaning for the participating generation, the human side of the ritual is forgotten. So Harvey Cox in his influential book *The Secular City*, forcefully argues that religion and worship should not be an escape from the duties of the secular world and of social justice. Religious worship should not put a premium on escape from the world in the name of the transcendent reality. Worship should be the act whereby the reality of God is made present and the resonance of that reality is heard in our communities and in our personal lives, dominating the instability of the times.¹³ As Edward A. Sovick says concerning church architecture, the designers of churches must "deal unabashedly with the finite, the ordinary, the secular, the everyday, the contemporary, the particular,"¹⁴ Though liturgy is

13 cf. Trotter F. Thomas. "Reality and Resonance: The Church Turns toward Worship" *Religion in Life* 43 (1974) 478-481.

14 "The Architecture of Kerygma" *Worship* 40 (1966) 196-208

the worship of God, it is not to take man away from his world, to escape from the tensions of his life, but to make him sensitive to the community, one with his brother next to him. Sacred music should not be a "telephone to the beyond."¹⁵

Ritual symbolism must capture authentic human sentiments. John Huizinga¹⁶ compares liturgy to play or a game. As playing a game has definite time, special dress and a form distinct from ordinary life, liturgy also is something special. It is not for the sake of something else but for the unique experience it contains. Romano Guardini also speaks of the play in liturgy, "life pouring itself forth without an aim."¹⁷ It is purposeless but meaningful, "pointless but significant". Participating in the liturgy means "foregoing maturity with all its purposefulness and confining oneself to play."¹⁸

The sacral aspect of human symbolism

But this emphasis on the human aspect of liturgical symbolism and the horizontal concern of contemporary society can and do sometimes unwittingly lead to an iconoclasm that denies the sacral aspect of worship. In the vehement protest against outmoded forms of worship some went to the extent of urging a deliberate "desacralization" of worship.¹⁹ Liturgists pleaded for a casting aside of "childish enthusiasms" in the liturgy and affirmed that a radical desacralization that included the casting down of idols and sanctuaries was necessary.²⁰ But this over-eagerness to make liturgy and symbolism relevant to contemporary man can be self-defeating if it loses sight of the vertical dimension. If the only function of cult and symbolism is to provide man with a sense of his fellowmen, if the whole ideal of a successful Mass is

15 Rembert Weakland OSB "Music as Art in Liturgy" *Worship* 41 (1967) 5-15

16 Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955

17 Romano Guardini. *The Church and the Catholic Spirit of the Liturgy*, Sheed & Ward, 1935 p. 179

18 *Ibid* p. 183

19 Jean-Paul Audet O. O. "The Future of the Liturgy" *Worship* 43 (1969) 449-64

20 *Concilium* n. 62 (1971) 14-29

to generate "the fun of a successful cocktail party"²¹ then the question is naturally raised why it should be religious at all. Is it not part of the old religious prejudice that my brother cannot be accepted and loved for what he is, but needs God as an excuse? Most of the movements that started out to secularize the liturgy followed this reasoning and reached this logical conclusion. Without knowing what the whole fun and socializing were for, the counter-culture soon ended up as an infatuation with fantasy, play and frolicking. Those who started with the intention of making liturgy relevant to the feeling and mood of young people today, "with simple living room Eucharists, with guitars, baker's bread and drugstore wine" soon found that these were meaningless and arbitrary concessions to a tradition, since all that they were looking for was a mere secular existence which could be found in any social festivity without calling in God or religion as an excuse. As Irving Howe has pointed out, for a good many Catholics and Protestants alike the new wave of social consciousness was a mere symptom that they had lost the substance of religion and only retained a core of religious yearning. For many of them "the religious symbols and vocabularies have become little more than enabling cues for the secular passions which are their real concern."²²

The function of religious symbolism is not merely to give us an awareness of the positive values of human fellowship, and of the actual concerns of humanity today, which can be had without any explicit reference to religion, God need not be appealed to, if I want to understand my need of other men, and to appreciate and accept my togetherness in life with them. I need God and religious symbolism to go beyond this purely human togetherness and to see this as a divine fellowship, rooted in the life of God, aiming at, and looking forward to, a final reunion of all men in the heavenly kingdom. Religious symbolism emphasizes the cosmic responsibility of man to build up all things into a living and articulate unity, without losing sight of immediate social and political responsibilities. Hence John Macquarrie says

21 Colman Grabert OSB. "Toward the Development of an Authentic English Sung Mass" *Worship* 40 (1966) 80-90

22 *Commentary*, Oct. 1971, p. 114

that the importance of eucharistic worship was never greater than it is today. Eucharistic worship and fellowship are a "witnessing and responding to the needs of today, affirming in our world the reality of God, the one source of faith, hope and love".²³ As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz asserts, by the ritual leap into the framework of meaning which religious conceptions define, a man is changed and for him the commonsense world also is changed, since "it is now seen as but the partial form of a wider reality, which corrects and completes it."²⁴

The human and sacral dimension of liturgical symbolism should be kept together. If it does not take into account the actual concerns and aspirations of man today, it will fail to be the living expression of his attitudes and endeavour. If it restricts itself to immediate and time-bound fads and particular concerns of today and loses sight of the sacral aspect, it will not present the authentic man, the cosmic and universal man rooted in God. The two dimensions should be kept together. Hence the following thesis of James Hitchcock is quite unacceptable: "Religious ritual which seeks consciously to become humanly relevant will in time suffer the opposite fate, while the truly relevant ritual is that which does not relate to man's most immediate concern, but instead, to less accessible realities which are of greater ultimate significance"²⁵ Such an attitude loses sight of the wholeness of Man. To view the ultimate significance of human life totally apart from the immediate concerns is to forget that the most radical and fundamental in each immediate concern is the final and ultimate meaning.

Spontaneity and universality

A similar tension in cultic symbolism is seen between individual spontaneity and universal impersonality. The Mediterranean and Aryan religious traditions generally emphasized

23 "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Theology and Worship" *Worship* 41 (1967) p. 160

24 Clifford Geertz. "Religion as a Cultural System" *The Religious Situation*, ed. Donald R. Culler, Boston, 1968, p. 680.

25 James Hitchcock. *The Recovery of the Sacred*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1974 pp. 39-40

decency, discretion and sobriety and projected the nobler universal image of man, while the Mongolian Babylonian and Indus Valley religions unabashedly encouraged the expression of the concrete and spontaneous, man's concern with his body, sex and fertility and the revelation of his spontaneous feelings in dance and gesture. Hindu worship, which tried to synthesize these two attitudes, assigned to the white Aryan gods the sexual and animal deities of the pre-Aryans as mounts or companions and subordinated the exuberant village cults to the sober and strictly controlled Brahmanical worship.

Nietzsche found the same polarity in the Greek tradition in the contrast between Apollo the god of noonday light and moral order, and Dionysus the mad god of intoxication. Apollo demands self-knowledge, the calm of the sculptor, the restraint of dance, and the rationality of dialogue, while Dionysus bursts out of nature with wild music, drunken dance and self-oblivion.²⁶

Western Christianity following the Judeo-Greek traditions had generally placed the emphasis on the common and universal celebration of salvation and allowed little scope for individual and spontaneous expression of religious feeling. In recent years, consequent upon the tragic situation created by the two great World Wars, the breakdown of traditional customs and the new philosophical movements like Phenomenology and Existentialism that stress the bodily and time-bound existence of man, there is a wide protest especially in the younger generation against stereotyped traditional worship. Not only singing and dancing but also screaming and unrestrained and naked emotion have come to break the monotony of traditional worship to the great dismay and protests of traditional liturgists.²⁷

26 F. Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner* trs. Walter Kaufman. Vintage Books, 1967, p. 46

27 cf. Richard A. Blake S. J. "Visual Rhetoric for the Word of God" *Worship* 42 (1968) 292-98; Gunther Rambold. "Creative Freedom in the Parish Church" *Liturgy in Transition*. ed. Hs Schmidt. *Concilium* 42 (1971) pp. 82-84; Thomas Merton. "Liturgy and Spiritual Personalism" *Worship* 34 (1960) 503-5; H. A. Reinhold. *Bringing the Mass to the People*, Baltimore, 1960, p. 37.

On the one hand the bodily existence of man and his individuality must be taken into account in public worship. People do not leave their bodies at home when they go to church. The human body is fundamental to human experience. I do not just wear a body or have a body; I am an embodied spirit. The body is the extension and manifestation of the spirit. It is not a static body either. Through its movements I cause my surroundings to exist for me. Moving is essential to thinking. Even the most sublime ideas are grasped and communicated through bodily gestures; intentions find their natural clothing in movements and are expressed in them. The dance is the most original and most universal form of worship. Even the most subdued liturgical rubrics, gestures, and processions are derived from it. Bodily gestures and movements that are essentially executed in space and time present the element of newness in the communitarian celebration. Hence the function of liturgical symbolism is to establish a harmony between intentions and bodily movements. Ritual is movements socially agreed upon. The movement itself is simultaneously evocative and expressive, a summoning and a projection, the whole person's way of perceiving his world and of being in it. We cannot imagine an inner man whom truth inhabits as totally distinct from the outer man, any more than we can reduce all perception to outer stimuli. Consciousness cannot be isolated "from the stuff in which it is realized".²⁸

In the liturgy a language of gesture is used. The process is not the formation of certain intellectual or spiritual ideas and insights first, which are then translated into appropriate gestures or symbols. The gestures themselves accomplish thought. Hence the effort "to perform significant acts" in the liturgy may miss the meaning of the act of worship in which the medium is actually the message. Such self-conscious effort, like false art, gives human life only a borrowed significance.²⁹ Paul Tillich's view that men cannot manufacture the symbols of faith though they can allow them to fossilize is relevant in this context.³⁰

28 cf. Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, p, 124

29 Marianne H. Micks. *The Future Present*, pp. 18-34

30 *Ibid* p. 23

When the intentions that inspire symbols are absent they cease to be human symbols. This must be a clear warning to those who want to revive old ceremonies and actions in worship and also to those who would like to invent new actions for ready-made meanings. Meaning and symbol, intention and gesture, go together.

The reformation of the liturgy in the spirit of Vatican II clearly took note of this need for spontaneity and living celebration. The reformed liturgy makes an effort to provide some opportunity for expressing the horizontal dimension of celebration in the spontaneous petitions and the exchange of peace. Though it decrees that the standard liturgical texts should be approved by the appropriate authority, sufficient regulatory discretion is given to the Bishop who presides over the celebration of the liturgy, evidently in view of the changing needs and circumstances of the actual celebration.³¹

But liturgical worship cannot be left to mere individual spontaneity or the passing mood of a group. As the self-expression of a community it has a historical dimension that goes back in time and actualizes the past in the present moment. The Vedic sage offering his morning sacrifice of hymn and ritual visualized before him the offering of Manu, the first man, and felt that he was imitating and repeating the creative sacrifice of the gods who brought the world into existence. In the same way, Christian liturgical worship is not a mere happening of a particular individual or group, but the saving sacrifice of Christ, celebrating the newness centred in his resurrection.

Liturgical symbolism, the total view

From what has been said it should be clear that in all religious traditions cultic symbolism implies a holistic approach to man. It combines the divine self-disclosure and human aspirations towards the absolute, the actual concerns of the present moment in history and the deposit of the whole past, the action of the individual and the self-expression of the community. According to Louis Bouyer the liturgical traditionalists are like

31 cf. *Sacram Liturgiam*, n. 22. 41 etc.

the Monophysites since they take all ecclesiastical institutions as equally sacred and immutable: they forget the fact that liturgy "spontaneously arose in the Christian community as the product of many individual efforts", gradually elaborated continually evolving within the community from which they came.³² On the other hand, those who fail to see the divine self-disclosure in liturgical worship and consider it a syncretic product borrowed from different religious traditions are caught in a sort of Nestorian dualism. They fail to see the unique event of salvation that forms the original source of the cultic movement. Equally guilty of a similar dualism are those who want to reject all sacrality in worship and consider it a celebration of the world as it is. Those who try "to find in the Incarnation a wholly new sacredness" that came down entirely from heaven also will not escape a radical dualism.³³

What Joachim Wach said about the experience of religions in general is true in this respect: What is found in religious experience is man's response to the ultimate reality behind all things apprehended as the Supreme Being. In worship man responds with his whole being, mind, body and emotions, with his individual as well as collective aspects. This experience is unique and is radically creative since it transforms him. What is fundamental to this experience is that it embraces the whole man, is fully human and at the same time puts him in communion with the divine.³⁴

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32 Louis Bouyer. *Rite and Man, Natural Sacredness and Christian Liturgy*. trs. M. Joseph Costelloe S. J., Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1963 p. 6.

33 *Ibid* pp. 7-11

34 Joachim Wach. *Comparative Study of Religions*, New York, 1958. Conclusion.

Puja: its Origin and Significance

Writers generally make a distinction between *pūjā* and *yajña*: the former with its emphasis on the sensible and the visible, is regarded as something non-Aryan and non-Vedic in origin,¹ whereas the latter, the highly spiritualized form of cult without any material representation of the godhead, is said to be the genuine Aryan pattern of worship.² *Pujā*, in this supposition, is an alien element the Indo-Aryans borrowed from their predecessors in the land, and if in the course of time it became widespread among the Aryans, it was due exclusively to the impact indigenous traditions had upon them. But can we be so sure about the provenance of *pūjā* from without? The problem becomes all the more complex when we remember that the pattern of worship represented by *pūjā* had already become something sacrosanct in the age of the great epics (circa 400 B. C. – 400 A. D.). It is the purpose of this article to try to explore the origin and meaning of *pūjā*. This study begins with a brief discussion on the word's etymology which is anything but clear.³

I

The technical term *pūjā*- (fem.) is non-Vedic in origin. Specialists have advanced a number of theories regarding its etymology, but before they can be discussed, it is necessary to

1 Cf. J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens. I. Veda und älterer Hinduismus* (Die Religionen der Menschheit 11, Stuttgart, 1960) p. 334. The present article is a chapter from a book entitled *The Religious Traditions of India* to be published in the near future.

2 On the origin and religious significance of yajna, cf. Luke. "Yajna: the Essence of Ancient Aryan Cult," *The Living Word* (1975).

3 An excellent summary in M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen II* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Zweite Reihe: Wörterbücher, Heidelberg, 1963) pp. 320 f.

have a good grasp of the different meanings the word has in classical tradition. The verbal root *pūj-*⁴ means "to honour, worship revere; to honour or present with (instrumental); to initiate, consecrate. "The noun form bears the meanings "honour, respect, reverence, veneration, homage to superiors, teachers and so on, worship, adoration of the gods". Compare, too, the formations *pūjana-* (neut.), "reverencing, honouring, worship, hospitable reception, "*pūjyātā-* (fem.), *pūjyatva-* (neut.), "venerableness, honourableness, the being entitled to honour," *pūjyapūjā-* (fem.), "honouring those who are worthy of honour," etc. The basic idea conveyed by the root under consideration is that of rendering honour, respect and the like to persons worthy of them. and when the worthies are the gods themselves, they receive the special type of reverence due to them, namely, worship, adoration. These meanings evidently are representative of the final stage in a long process of evolution whose antecedents remain to be investigated.

Coming now to the etymology of *pūjā-*, a Dravidian origin has been postulated by several scholars who have also suggested at least three distinct bases. A theory that is oversubtle⁵ and as such remains unconvincing is that it is a derivative of Tamil *pū-cey-*, "to offer flowers:" *pu-* is the common Dravidian word for flower⁶ and *cey-* has such meanings as "to do, make, create, cause," and *pūjā*, accordingly, will be *puṣpakarman-* or *puṣpār-cana-*,⁷ "offering of flowers to the godhead." A second theory is that *pūj-* is a sanskritized form of Tamil *pūc-*, "to besmear,

4 Cf. Dhāttupāṭha 10:101 (cited according to O. Böhtlingk, *Pāṇini's Grammatik* [repr., Hildesheim, 1964]).

5 "linguistisch zu kühn" (Mayrhofer. *op, cit.*, p. 320).

6 Cf. T. Burrow- M. B. Emeneau, *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (Oxford, 1961). In what follows the meanings of Dravidian words are cited according to this lexicon.

7 It is unlikely that the word *puṣpa-* (which, incidentally, is vedic) is formed from *pu-*; what is more likely is that it is a dialectal variant of *puṣman-* (Mayrhofer, *op, cit.*, pp. 317f.).

8 Other meanings, cognate with the ones listed in the text, are "scrub the floor with cowdung dissolved in water, clean, wash."

anoint, daub on, plaster,"⁸ and *pūjā* in this hypothesis denotes the action of smearing the idol with red powder, etc.⁹ A third root that has been proposed is *pōj-*, *pōccu-*, surviving in Tamil *pōrru-*, "to praise, applaud, worship, cherish, nourish, entertain;" compare too the noun form *pōrrimai*, "honour, reverence."

The appeal of scholars to Dravidian roots has as its reason the assumption that *pūjā* is of non-Aryan origin, but as will be shown in the third part of this study, there is all likelihood that it represents a popular form of worship that existed in the Aryan community side by side with, but independently of, the priestly ritual of sacrifice. Let us now examine the hypotheses of scholars who derive our word from Indo-European bases.

Pūjā has been regarded as a derivative of the Slavic base *pug-*, occurring in Russian *pugatj*, *is-pugatj*, "to frighten, scare, intimidate, threaten," and *pugatjsya*, "to be frightened, startled, to take fright at, shy at."¹⁰ In this interpretation *pūjā* will convey the idea of reverential awe such as man experiences when he is in the presence of the godhead or when he has a numinous experience. Needless to say, not all are convinced of the accuracy of this derivation.

Some specialists have tried to explain *pūjā* in the light of Iranian, and they have linked it with three distinct words attested by the language of Iran. Modern Persian *pōzis*, "repentance, contrition, remorse," has been thought of as a cognate of *pūjā*,¹¹ but the difficulty with this contention is that there

9 Thus J. Charpentier, "Ueber den Begriff und die Etymologie von *pūjā*, *Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte Indiens. Festgabe Hermanu Jacobi* (Bonn, 1926) pp. 276-97; revised English translation, "The Meaning and Etymology of *Pūjā*," *Indian Antiquary* 56 (1927) pp. 93-98, 130-35.

10 The consonant *j* in the words cited above serves to show that the preceding consonant is palatalized; Russian infinitives end in *-atj*, *-itj*, or *-tjsya*.

11 Thus C. C. Uhlenbeck *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch der altindischen Sprache* (Amsterdam, 1898-9, repr., 1973) p. 240.

is no semantic correspondence between the two expressions. Another form that has been brought in is Middle Persian *apuxsaisn*, "compassion, mercy,"¹² but here there is an objection that is decisive; the Middle Persian form is a composite noun consisting of the verbal prefix *apa-* and the root *xsad-*.¹³ It has too been argued that *pūjā* is a cognate of Modern Persian *baxsūdan*, "to be gracious, forgive," and the putative Iranian base *puxsāya-*, "to behave respectfully, to show respect," has been reconstructed;¹⁴ this suggestion has not, however, been accepted by the world of scholars..

Mention must finally be made of the view of Paul Thieme¹⁵ a view that has been endorsed by Richard Hauschild¹⁶ and Louis Renou¹⁷— that *pūjā* is a Middle Indic formation from the San-

12 Cf. H. Jensen, *Neupersische Grammatik mit Berücksichtigung der historischen Entwicklung* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Erste Reihe: Grammatiken, Heidelberg, 1931) § 149 (p. 125, where reference is made to P. Horn, "Neupersische Schriftsprache," *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie* I / 2 [Strassburg, 1898, repr., 1974] p. 131); Jensen also reconstructs the putative Old Persian form *apuxsāyati-* (*ibid.*).

13 Cf. H. S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi* II (Wiesbaden, 1974) p. 28. Cf. too A. Ghilian, *Essai sur la langue parthe, son système verbal d' après les textes manichéens du Turkestan* (Bibliothèque du Museon 9, Louvain, 1939, repr., 1966) p. 70.

14 Thus the great Iranist C. Bartholomae, *Grundriss* I / 1, p. 81. There is too in Modern Persian the verb *baxsidan*, "to give, forgive," which corresponds to Middle Persian *baxtan*, and Avestan *baxs-* (= Sanskrit *bhāj-*), "to give, share" (Jensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 124f.).

15 Cf. his detailed Study, "Indische Wörter und Sachen," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gessllschaft* 93 (1939) pp. 105-37 (cf. especially pp. 105-23).

16 Cf. A. Thumb- R. Hauschild, *Handbuch des Sanskrit* II (Indogermanische Bibliothek. Erste Reihe: Lehr- und Handbücher, 2nd ed., Heidelberg, 1953) p. 265.

17 Cf. "Introduction générale," in J. Wackernagel- A. Debrunner, *Altindische Grammatik* I (rev. ed., Göttingen, 1954) p. 103, n. 436; cf. too p. 106, n. 475.

skrit root *parc-* which, incidentally, is vedic, occurring in the R̥gveda with prefixes such as *a-*, *upa-*, *pra-*, etc.,¹⁸ and takes in the course of inflection the nasal infix; hence *pr̥ṇakti*, *pr̥ṇakṣi*, etc. The meanings attested are "to mix, mingle, put together, join, to fill, sate, satiate, give lavishly, bestow anything richly upon," etc. Indic *prac-* goes back to Indo-European *per-k-*, "to fill," etc.,¹⁹ a base which, according to J. Pokorny, survives in Middle Irish *ercaim* (first person singular), "fill."²⁰ we shall not discuss here the use of *parc-* in vedic literature, since it has nothing to contribute to the problem of etymology.

A noun form derived from *parca* is *parka-* occurring in the compound *madhuparka-* (mas.), which is a technical term denoting a mixture of honey and milk offered to a guest, or to the bridegroom on his arrival at the bride's house; at times this offering may consist of equal parts of curds, honey and clarified butter, and the very rite of welcoming guests with this preparation came to be known as *madhuparka*. Compare the expressions *madhuparkadāna-* (neut.), "giving / offering of *madhuparka*," *madhuparkapāṇi-*, "having the *madhuparka* oblation in hand, offering it," *madhuparkika-*, "presenting the offering of honey, etc.," *madhuparkya* "worthy of *madhuparka*," etc.²¹

18 References in H. Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rigveda* (4th ed., Wiesbaden, 1964), cols. 850-52.

19 The base consists of the stem *per-* plus the extension *-k-*; for details, cf. E. Benveniste, *Origines de la formation des noms en indo-européen* (4th impres., Paris, 1973).

20 Cf. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I (Bern, 1959) p. 820 (cf. too Mayrhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 330).

21 The expression occurs too as title of books; e.g., *Madhuparkanirṇaya*, *-prayoga*, and *-mantra* (M. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* [repr., Oxford, 1970] sub voce). That the custom of preparing sweet mixtures with honey was widespread in the early vedic age is borne out by the occurrence of the hapax legomenon *madhupracam* (*agnim*) in the first Veda (2:10:6). The poet elicits the wish that he and his associates may have the wisdom and authority of Manu who was directly instructed by the gods; he goes on to add that he invokes agni who is *madhuprac-*, i.e., who mixes words with sweetness. The

As will be pointed out later on, the verbal base *pūj-* and the noun form *pūjā-* occur in contexts where there is a question of receiving guests. Could it not be that the reason for this use is their origin from the root underlying *parka-*, the term so closely associated with the exercise of hospitality? Well, the question should be answered in the affirmative, and there are cogent and positive reasons for doing so.

Periphrastic formations with the verb *kar-*, "to do, make," are well known in Sanskrit;²² *pūjām kar-*, "to do/offer *pūjā* to someone," is quite idiomatic in Sanskrit, and on the basis of this usage it is also quite legitimate to argue that there were in vogue expressions such as *prñcām akar*, *prñcām karotu*, *prñcām cakāra*, etc.²³ In the mouth of the common people the form *prñcām* gradually degenerated into *puñcām*, which in its turn

reference here seems to be to the custom of feeding the sacred fire with mixtures of clarified butter and honey to the accompaniment of a chant (compare 4:38:10), and such a rite could very well be called *agnipūjā*.

22 The other auxiliaries used to form periphrastic tenses are *as-*, "to be," and *bhū-* id. (very rare); the only periphrastic perfect in the Vedas is *gamayām cakāra*, "he made the journey" (= "he went"; cf. also *mīmāmsām eva cakre*, "he [merely] made speculation" (= "he merely speculated"); discussions and examples in W. D. Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar* (10th repr., Harvard, 1964) §§ 1069-75 (pp. 391-95). The formation *pañṇākāra-* in Pāli certainly vouches for what has been said.

23 The form *prñcā-* is a reconstructed one, and though it is not attested by any of the extant sources, it is nonetheless possible to argue for its existence on the basis of the expression *pañṇākāra-*, "gift, donation," occurring in the Pāli texts, compare the following statements from the Mahāummagga-Jātaka: *rājā... sahassamūlam pañṇākāram pesesi*, "The king sent *pañṇākāra* worth a thousand pieces;" *Amarādevī... pañṇākāram... pesesi*, "Amarādevī sent *pañṇākāra*;" the plural too is attested: "They sent (*pahiṇimsu*) *pañṇākāre*, *pañṇākāras*" (D. Andersen, *A Pāli reader I* [repr., Kyoto, Japan, 1968] text no. 29). The verbs *akar*, etc. are the imperfect, imperative and perfect respectively of the auxiliary *kar-* (or *kṛ*, according to the traditional Indian way of citing).

evolved into *pumjām*) *pujjām*) *pūjām*, and the last named form gave rise not only to *pūjā-* but also to the denominative verbal base *pūjā-*. At any rate the noun and the verb exhibit "volks- sprachliche Lautgestalt,"²⁴ the peculiar pattern of pronunciation proper to popular usage, for after all the persons engaged in offering hospitality to guests were not always members of the cultured and educated priestly classes but rather the simple folk, including even house wives and slaves. And the exercise of the virtue of hospitality was held in such high esteem that the Code of Manu felt compelled to put it on a par with *yajña*: *nṛyājñō'tithipūjanam* (3: 70), "welcoming guests is *yajna* (offered) to men."

In conclusion, there is no difficulty in admitting the Indo-Aryan origin of the term *pūjā*, and though initially it designated the paterfamilias's action of offering *madhuparka* to the guest coming to his house, and thus of tendering him a cordial welcome. the expression was subsequently transferred to the worship of the gods. This was a simple matter of course, particularly since the gods were themselves regarded by the vedic Aryans as the worshippers' guests.

II

To demonstrate his understanding of the etymology and meaning of *pūjā*, Thieme has cited a number of passages from the *Rāmāyaṇa*,²⁵ but before the evidence is examined, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the various items or elements required for the performance of solemn *pūjā*. Abbé Dubois gives the following list:²⁶ 1) *āhvāna*-²⁷ "invocation of the deity." 2) *āsana*²⁸ "seat" for the god to sit upon," 3) *svāgata*-, "asking

24 Thieme, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

25 *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-20. Any number of parallel passages can be cited from the *Purāṇas* as well.

26 In his *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1905); cf. too Thieme, *op. cit.*, p. 108 where the list is reproduced.

27 This is of course a vedic rite.

28 In the vedic age the *vedi*, i. e., the altar where sacrifices used to be offered, served doubtless as the seat (or even abode) of the gods who had been brought there by Agni (cf. part III).

whether the journey has been comfortable, welcome," 4) *pādyā-*,²⁹ "water to wash his feet," 5) *arghya-*, "water with flowers, saffron and sandalwood," 6) *ācamanīya-*, "water to rinse the mouth and to wash the face," 7) *madhuparka-*, "mixture of honey, sugar and milk," 8) *snānājala-*, water for bath," 9) *bhuṣaṇābharaṇaśya-*, "decking the god with clothes, jewels and ornaments," 10) *gandha-*, "perfume," i. e., sandalwood powder as scent, 11) *akṣatas-*,³⁰ "grains of rice coloured with saffron," 12) *puṣpa-*, "flowers," 13) *dhūpa-*, "incense," 14) *dīpa-*, "lighted lamp," and 15) *naivedya-*,³¹ "mixture of cooked rice, fruit, clarified butter, sugar and other edibles, and betel leaves."³² What all these material things, and the actions necessarily connected with them, point to is the paterfamilias's extending of a cordial welcome to the god who has condescended to come to him as guest.

We can have a clear idea of the way in which guests used to be received in ancient India from the *gṛhyasūtras*,³³ We add here a section from the *Aśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra* (1:24) which deals with the manner and mode of welcoming a *ṛtvij*:³⁴ "When

29 Literally, "what pertains to the foot" (on the suffix *-ya-*, cf. n. 51 below).

30 Literally, "not crushed, unbroken, whole," i. e., unhusked, uncrushed grains of rice; husked grains of unboiled paddy, pop-corn made of rice, etc., which too are ingredients of *pūjā*, are covered by the present term.

31 Also *nivedya-*, which is essentially food served to the god.

32 The custom, so widespread in India, of chewing betel leaves is something the Aryans borrowed from their predecessors in the land, for there is no reference to it in the Vedas, Sūtras and Epics, the earliest mention of it being found in the Buddhist Jātākas. The terms *tāmbūla-* and *guvāka-*, "betel," are both Austric in origin (B. Walker, *Hindu World. An Encyclopaedic Survey* I [London, 1968] pp. 133f.). In classical India offering of *tāmbūla* to guests was an integral part of hospitality.

33. Cf. too the description of the manner in which guests are to be received in Manu 3:99-113.

34 The *hotar*, *adhvaryu*, *brahman* and *udgātar*, are all called by this name, which literally means "sacrificing at the proper time"; they have their own helpers, namely, three each, so that the total number of the *ṛtvijas* is sixteen (cf. *Aśvalāyana Śrautasūtra* 4:1:4-6).

he has chosen the *ṛtvijas*, he should offer them *madhuparka*.... He pours honey into curds, or butter, if he can get no honey. A seat, the water for washing the feet, the *arghya* water, the water for sipping, the honey-mixture, a cow: everyone of these things they announce three times (to the guest)... He (the guest) should sit down on a seat (made of) northward-pointed (grass)... He should make (his host) wash his feet... When his feet have been washed, he receives the *arghya* water in the hollow of his joined hands and then sips the water... He looks at the *madhuparka* when it is brought to him... He accepts it with joined hands... He then takes it into his left hand,... stirs it about three times from left to right with the fourth finger and the thumb, and wipes (his fingers)... He three times takes (some of the *madhuparka*)... He then makes a rinsing of his mouth follow (on the eating of *madhuparka*) with the water destined for the purpose..."³⁵

The guest's partaking of the mixture of honey, etc. is the most important item in the text cited here, and the lawgiver's injunction *madhuparkam āharet*,³⁶ "He should offer *madhuparka*," can very well be paraphrased *pūjām kuyāt*, "Let him do *pūjā*," or *pūjām upāharet*, or as *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.51:5 has it, *upāharet pūjām*, "Let him offer *pūjā*. "There are many passages in the sources that show that *pūjā* - welcoming of guests - was held in the highest esteem as an integral part of the Aryan gentleman's etiquette; compare the following statements from the *Rāmāyaṇa*: *kariṣye... pūjām... vidhipūrvakam* (1:10:15), "so that *pūjā* may be offered in accordance with *vidhi*" (i.e., prescriptions of the codes of conduct); *nyāyatah pratipuṣya*... (1:13:2), "honoured in accordance with *nyāya*" (or rules); *pūjām... vidhivat prāpya* (1:49:22), "being honoured in accordance with *vidhi*," *pādyam ācamanīyam ca... prādāt yathāvidhi* (3:74:7), "he, in accordance with *vidhi*, offered water to wash the feet (*pādyā*-) and water to rinse the mouth and to wash the face" (*ācamanīya*-).

35 Cited with slight modifications from H. Oldenberg, *The Gṛhya Sūtras* (The Sacred Books of the East 29, repr., Delhi, 1967).

36 The periphrastic construction *āhāram kar-* too could very well have been used instead of this verb.

That actually guests used to be received as prescribed by the sacred laws of the Aryans is amply borne out by the sources. We give here a paraphrase of a few Passages from the *Rāmāyana* so as to illustrate the point (the numerals within brackets refer to the items in Dubois' list cited above). He offered the god *pūjā pādya* - (4) *arghya* - (5) *āsana* - (2) *vandanaiḥ* (instrumental plural) in accordance with vidhi (1.2:25); the ṛṣiputra offered *pūjā (pūjām. . cakāra)* by bringing forward *arghyam* (5), *pādyam* (4), *mūlam phalam* (15) *ca* (1:10:17). When the great sage Viśvāmitra was seated (2) *yathānyāyam*, in accordance with the rules, *phalamūlam upāharet*, he offered him *phalamūla* (1:52:3f.). He was *supūjita*, heartily welcomed *phalamūlena* (15), *pādyena* (4) *ācamanīyena* (6) *bhagavaddarśana ca*, with the vision of the blessed one (1:52:16 f.) They welcomed him *nānābharaṇair* (9) *yathārham* (2:1:46f.), with all kinds of abharaṇas as it behoved. The descendant of Raghu was honoured *phalair mūlaih* (15) *puṣpaiḥ* (12) *cānaiḥ ca* (3:12:3). Instead of the verb *pūj-* the base *arc-* is also used by the sources: *arcitam vividhair gandhair* (10) *dhūpaiḥ* (13) *ca* (1:31:13); the base may be employed with the term *pūjā* in the instrumental case: *abhyarcya*, he revered the *pitṛdevatās navāgrayaṇa* (15) *pūjābhik* (3:16:6).

Pūjā can be offered not only to men and gods but also to sacred objects. It is interesting to note that at times the gods and the guests are mentioned together: according to the *Arthasāstra* (1:3:11) one of the main duties of the sannyāsin is *devatāpitṛ-atithipūjā*, "offering of *pūjā* to the gods, ancestors, and the guests; "in the *Rāmāyana* the people of Ayodhya are described as *devatātithipūjaka* (1:6:7), "pūjakas of gods and guests." The epithet *pujanīya-* or *pūjanārha-* was predicated of guests: king Deśaratha *priyātithim upatiṣṭham paramasatkāraiḥ pūjanārham apūjayat* (1:73:6f.), honoured the dear guest worthy of *pūjā* who had taken his seat with the best *satkāra*. "The *priyātithi* is also called *pūjanīyaḥ ca manyāḥ ca* (3:12:30). From among the various sacred objects that used to be revered with *pūjā* we may mention the *yūpa*:³⁷ it is said to have been honoured (*pūjita-*) *vasobhih*

37 That is, the sacrificial pole or stake, on its significance, cf. J. L. Sauvé, "The Divine Victim: Some Aspects of Human Sacrifice in Viking Scandinavia and Vedic India," *Myth and Law*

(9), *puṣpair* (12) *gandhaiś* (13) *ca* (1:14:27). Weapons too were wont to be venerated in a special way; thus *Rāmāyaṇa* (1:67:6) refers to a bow which was *pūjitam sarvarājābhih* "honoured by all kings; "two celestial bows are said to be *lokābhipujite* (1:75:11), and an āyudhapūjā is performed *vividhair gandhair* (10) *dhupaiś* (13) *ca* (1:31:12 f.).

We shall bring our survey of evidence to a close with two more citations from well known authorities who bear witness to the customs and usages of the 5th-4th centuries B.C. Yāska, the author of *Nirukta*,³⁹ remarks: *simho vyāghraiti puṣyāyām, śvakāka iti kutsāyām* (3:18), "When honour is meant (people say), 'He is a lion, he is a tiger, "but when insult is meant, 'He is a dog, he is a crow". "Pāṇini (2:1:61) observes: *sanmahatparamottamotkr̥ṣṭah puṣyamānaih*, the terms "sat, mahat, parama, uttama, and utkr̥ṣṭa are added to (designations of persons or things) worthy of honour."⁴⁰

The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing is that pūjā was originally the paterfamilias's action of welcoming guests. Now such an activity has nothing pre- or non-Aryan about it, since the offering of a seat, water for ablutions, special beverages, etc. are but the universally recognized expressions of hospitality. When this type of welcome is offered to the gods who are supposed to be present before the worshipper as his guests, that action - pūjā - becomes a sacred, cultic, religious function. Can it be shown that this custom was prevalent in the vedic age? Are there passages in *Avesta*, Homeric poems, etc. which help us to have some idea of the norms of hospitality that governed the lives of the Indo-European peoples of antiquity? The answer to these questions is given in the ensuing section.

among the Indo-Europeans. Studies in Indo-European Comparative Mythology (Publications of the University of California, Los Angeles Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology I, Berkeley, 1970) pp. 173-91 (p. 183).

38 This is a genuine Indo-European custom, a discussion of which cannot unfortunately be attempted here.

39 The *Nirukta*, i.e., "Etymology," is the earliest extant commentary on the Vedas.

40 Cf. n. 9 above

III

The Aryans were most remarkable for their sense of hospitality,⁴¹ and this virtue was held in the highest esteem so much so that religious thinkers went to the extent of giving mystical and abstruse meanings to the various gestures that accompanied the welcoming of guests. The clearest example of this is furnished by *Atharvaveda* 9:6 which is an exquisite composition in praise of the entertainment of guests⁴². In fact, hospitality is here thought of as a most meritorious sacrifice. We shall paraphrase some of the more interesting statements. When the atithipati (host) catches sight of his guests, it is as though he were witnessing a solemn sacrifice (v. 3) when he offers them water, he is bringing forward the sacred, sacrificial waters (v.4); the feeling of satisfaction the guests experience is comparable to the sacrificial animal that is bound (v.6); preparing lodging for them is the same as getting ready the seat and oblation-holders (v.7); the couch prepared for them is the barhis grass (v. 8), and the ointment and unguent

41 The name *ārya-* has been interpreted in terms of hospitality by Thieme in his original monograph *Der Fremdling in Rgveda: Eine Studie über die Bedeutung der Worte ari, arya, arya-man und ārya* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 23/ 2, Leipzig, 1938, repr., 1969). In this understanding the base is *ari-* (from Indo-European *al-i-*; cf. Latin *alius*, Greek *allos*, from *alyos*), "stranger," and *arya-* is the one who protects (welcomes) the stranger, the hospitable one, the host. A parallel semantic evolution is attested by Latin *hostis* (from Indo-European *ghosti-s*), "stranger, foe," and its Germanic equivalent *gastiz* (Modern German *Gast*, English *guest*), "the stranger whom one has received into the house," i.e., "the guest" (F. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* [20th ed., Berlin, 1967] p. 234). This is certainly an interesting hypothesis, which, it would now seem, must be discarded particularly since Hittite attests the form *arawa-*, "free" (cf. E. Laroche, "Hittite *arawa-*, 'libre'," *Hommages à Georges Dumézil* [Col. Latomus 45, Brussels, 1960] pp. 124-28). The designation *arya-* / *ārya-* can very well mean the free, noble citizen.

42 Translation with commentary in Whitney, *Atharva-Veda Samhitā* (Harvard Oriental Series 7-8, repr., Delhi, 1971).

offered to them the sacrificial butter (v.11); the special bite anticipatory of the meal proper is the sacrificial cake (v. 12); the grains of rice and barley that are scattered signify the soma shoots (v.14). Offering of water, preparing of couches, presenting of oil and perfumes, giving of appetizers, pouring of milk, honey, etc. and finally waiting on the guests as they partake of food were, then, the integral constituents of atithipūjā in the age of the *Atharvaveda*.

Let us now pass on to a brief survey of the evidence furnished by the *Rgveda*. The following text gives us a graphic description of the way in which guests used to be treated: "Though all my guests are assembled here, my own father-in-law has not come; he could have eaten grain⁴³, drunk soma,⁴⁴ and being satisfied could have returned home" (10:28:1). According to tradition,⁴⁵ the poem in 10:28 is the record of a dialogue between Indra and his son the ṛṣi Vasukra: when the latter was offering a solemn sacrifice, Indra had arrived at the scene incognito, but the sage's wife, unaware of his presence, complained about his absence. According to her, had he come, he could have eaten grain, drunk soma and enjoyed the meal, after which of course he could go back. For the historian the woman's utterance, with its mention of the way in which hospitality was practised, is of the utmost importance: on his arrival at an Aryan home, the guest used to be offered food and drink; he ate and drank as much as he wanted, and, fully contented, he returned home. We shall soon have occasion to see that the items offered to the guests have their parallels in the *Avesta*, etc.⁴⁶

Going a step further we say that the vedic Aryans were convinced that the gods would flock to their hearth as guests.

43 The word used by the poet is *dhānā-* (cf. *dhānyā-*), "fried barley or rice, any grain fried and powdered."

44 On the soma rite, cf. the article referred to in n 2 above.

45 Cf. K. F. Geldner, *Der Rig-Veda* III (Harvard Oriental Series 35, Harvard, 1951) pp. 169-71.

46 Several interesting details in Thieme, "Vorzarathustrisches bei den Zarathustriern und bei Zarathustra," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107 (1957) pp. 67-104 (pp. 77-83).

Thus the god Agni who alone, among the members of the pantheon, bears the epithet *grhapati-*,⁴⁷ is often called *atithi-*, "guest,"⁴⁸ and *dūta-*,⁴⁹ "messenger," the one who carries men's oblations to the gods and also brings these latter to the sacrifice in his shining, golden car drawn by two or more ruddy and tawny steeds. The sages enunciate the wish: "May he *devām eha vakṣati* lead the gods hither" (1:1:2). The same god is described as *devo devebhir ā gamat*, "the god who has come with the gods" (1:1:5). In short, Agni is not only the paterfamilias but also the guest and the special person appointed to lead in the guests, and as the gods came in as *atithis*, they were naturally welcomed in the manner and way in which any other mortal used to be welcomed.

The tradition of the *Avesta* is no less clear on the point; the following stanza from the celebrated hymn to Mithra⁵⁰ is quite illustrative of Iranian usage (Yast 80:6):

... *yazamaide*
haomayō gava barəsmāna
hižvō danhanha manthraca
vacaca syaothnaca vāgzibyō

47 Cf. Ṛgveda 1:60:4, 4:9:4 (with *dame*, "at home"), 2:1:2, 10:9:10 (with *nas dame*, "at our home"), 6:15:19 (with *janānām*, "populorum, of peoples"), 1:36:5, 6:15:13, 7:16:5, 10:122:1 (with *hotar-* in parallellism), etc.

48 "Als Gast der Menschen wird besonders Agni bezeichnet" (Grassmann, *op. cit.*, col. 28).

49 Agni is the messenger *devānām martiānām*, "of gods and men" (10:4:2), *devānām*, "of the gods" (3:54:19. 5:26:6. 6:15:9. 10:137:3), *viśvasya*, "of the whole world" (7:16:1), etc. (cf. too 1:44:2, 72:7, 74:4 etc. where *dūta-* is used absolutely).

50 This is the vedic god Mitra. Text of the poem in transliteration with translation and commentary in I. Gershevitch. *The Avestan Hymn to Mitra* (The University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 4, Cambridge, 1959); for notes on the stanza discussed, cf. pp, 163, 322.

“We worship (Mithra) with haoma-containing milk and baresman twigs, with skill of tongue and magic-word, with speech and action and libations, and with correctly uttered words.” The text needs a concise explanatory commentary.

“We worship:” *yazamaide* which is the equivalent of Sanskrit *yajāmahe*, “Haoma-containing milk”: *haomayō gava*, which is best interpreted as the instrumental form of the compound *haomayō gav-*: *gav-* is not a problem even to the non-Iranist, but this is not the case with the first word. From the point of view of formation, *haomaya-* (from *haomya* is an adjective created from *haoma-* with the help of the Indo-European suffix *-yo*⁵¹ (which, in the Aryan languages, becomes *-ya-*); *haomya-* is therefore “haoma-ish” (“soma-ish”), and the compound can, then, be rendered “haoma-ish milk,” or “haoma-containing milk.” What is meant is, of course, milk with an admixture of haoma, the sacred and intoxicating drink of the ancient Aryans.⁵² In short, the guest, as he steps in, is offered an exhilarating, invigorating drink.

“Baresman twigs:” *barəsmāna*, an instrumental like the phrase just discussed. The *barəsmān-* are the bundle of twigs the *zōtar*⁵³ holds in his hand as he performs the liturgy. In

51 This was a quite productive suffix in Indo-European; compare Greek *patr-io-s* (= Skt. *pitṛ-ya-*). Latin *rēg-iu-s* (= Sanskrit *raj-ya-*), etc. An interpretation different from the one adopted in the text has been proposed by Thieme, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-77: the actual Avestan text represents a wrong division of *haoma yaogava*, the latter term being the equivalent of late vedic *yavāgū-*, “rice-gruel, decoction made with grain.” The element *yao-* of the second word came to be added to *haoma*, and then *-ao* was contracted to *-ō* in the final position; the rendering, in this supposition, will be, “with haoma, with barley-milk.” Is it, however, necessary to make the Avestan scribe guilty of such a blunder?

52 Gershevitch, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

53 In Sanskrit *hotar-*, a designation well known to all readers.

the Younger Avesta⁵⁴ it consists not of twigs but of plants, or rather of grass, and since the expression occurs as the object of *fra-* and *star-*,⁵⁵ "to prepare, spread out". What the writers had originally in mind was the custom of spreading grass on the ground, doubtless for the guest to sit upon.⁵⁶

The guest who has refreshed himself with the delicious intoxicating drink and is seated comfortably on the grass-strewn floor of the hearth is now entertained "with skill of tongue and magic word..." Mithra, the Indo-Aryan (nay, the Indo-European)

54 Specialists generally distinguish two main language-divisions in the Avesta, viz. Gāthic, the archaic form of language in which are composed Zarathushtra's own songs, prayers, hymns, etc. and a few other sections, and a later variety occurring in the other parts of the collection and these form the Young(er) Avesta.

55 Thieme, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-75. Here are a few texts to illustrate the use of *fra-star-* (cf. Latin *ster-nere*, *pro-ster-nare*) in the Avesta: We worship Sraosa... who first *barəsmā frastərənata* spread forth the baresman" (Yasna 57: 5f.); "I desire to approach this *berəsmā... asaya frastarətəm* spread with *asa*," i.e., truth (Yasna 2: 1. Cf. too 4: 1. 62: 2. 71: 23 etc.); "We worship Sraosa... who first adored Ahura *frastarətāth paiti barəsmən* with the baresman spread" (Yasna 57: 2); "He shall *hazanrəm frastərətanam barəsmaine frastairyāth* bundle up thousand baresmans into the baresman" (Videvadat 18: 72). The first Veda too employs the verb *prastar-* with *barhis-* as its object (cf. the next note). For the sake of those who may not be familiar with Iranistics, we wish to point out that inverted e (ə) represents an obscure vowel comparable to the sound heard in *but*, or in the final syllable of *father*

56 In vedic India the grass that was strewn on the ground was called *barhis-* (on its etymological connection with *bare sman-*, cf. Thieme, *op. cit.*, p. 72): the first Veda speaks several times of the spreading (*prastar-*) of *barhis-*; compare *strñāta barhir ānuṣag...* (1: 13: 5), "Strew the barhis grass in due order..." Indra and Agni "both stand adorned when fires are duly kindled *barhir u tistirāṇā* spreading the barhis grass" (1: 108: 4; cf. too 135:1, 142:5, 177: 4, etc.).

god of oaths, contracts and international relations is honoured in exactly the same way as any guest who happens to come to an Aryan home; the worship of Mithra is, then, described in terms of the rites of atithipūjā.

The Homeric poems confirm what we have said about the customs of India and Iran. The following text, occurring in an account of a banquet, is quite relevant:⁵⁷

“Here the enclosures, entrance ways, and rooms
were filled with men, young men and old, for whom
Alkinoos had put twelve sheep to sacrifice,
eight tuskers and a pair of shambling oxen.
These, now, they flayed and dressed to make their banquet...
Pontonoos fixed a studded chair for him (the guest)...
placed a bread basket at his side, and poured
wine in a cup, that he might drink his fill.
Now each man’s hand went out upon the banquet.”

The sequence in this description is noteworthy: a chair is got ready for the guest, a basket containing bread is put at his side, and wine is poured into his goblet; mention has already been made of the fleshmeat prepared for the occasion. And even though there is no question here of man’s welcoming the gods as his guests, the affinity the account has with the traditions of Iran and India is unmistakable.

Another rite that was prescribed by the norms of hospitality prevalent among the Greeks was the washing of the guest’s feet. When Odysseus came home after all his adventures, his wife Penelope, who did not recognize him, gave the following order to her maid:⁵⁸

“Eurynome, a bench, a spread of sheepskin,
to put my guest at ease...”

The old housemaid Eurykleia was asked to wash the guest’s feet:

57 Cf. *Odyssey* 8: 59–74; the English version cited here is that of R. Fitzgerald, *Homer The Odyssey* (Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1963)

58. The account occurs in the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*.

"I have an old maidservant...
Let her then wash your feet..."

The woman recognized the stranger from a scar on his thigh and then out of unbounded joy

"... let go (the leg),
and into the basin fell the lower leg
making the bronze clang, sloshing the water out."

This touching scene has been masterfully commented upon by Erich Auerbach.⁵⁹ As far as we are concerned, the account faithfully portrays the way in which guests used to be received by hospitable folk in ancient Greece. What we have here is, therefore, the Greek counterpart of Indo-Aryan atithipūjā.

The mythologies, legends and sagas of the other Indo-European peoples too include descriptions of solemn repasts, a discussion of which will certainly confirm what has just been said. It cannot, however, be attempted in an article of limited scope like the present one.

In the light of the foregoing discussions we may now summarize as follows the semantic evolution of *pūjā*. Originally it meant the action of tendering a cordial welcome to the newly-arrived guest, which included such ceremonies as greeting, offering of a seat, washing of the feet, a bath, anointing with oil and unguents, etc. The next stage in the development of this ceremonial was marked by the transfer of the whole world of ideas to the gods, and hence the sense "to welcome a god as guest, honour him as guest." In the final stage the base acquired too the meaning "to honour objects that are divine, sacred" (e. g., weapons, sacrificial utensils, amulets, charms, etc.) with flowers, scent and the like. At the time of *pūjā* it is customary to smear the idol with red powder, etc., from which, however, it does not follow that the base *pūj-* is a modification of Dravidian *pūs-*; the whole ceremony, on the contrary, is the ritual variation of the custom of anointing guests with unguents.

59 Cf. his great work *Mimesis, the Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1967) pp. 1-20.

The essence of pūjā consists, therefore, in the worshipper's action of welcoming the godhead in the way in which guests are welcomed, and the most salient feature of this sacred rite is the great sense of intimacy binding together the host and the guest. In Judaeo-Christian tradition, too, God is thought of as coming to man as his guest, particularly in and through the Covenant. Recent studies⁶⁰ have shown that the Israelite idea of God's Covenant with man is patterned upon the suzerainty treaties the Hittite emperors were wont to impose upon their vassals.⁶¹ The records of these treaties dwell at length upon the favour the suzerains showed their vassals and how they inculcated the need the latter had of being faithful to the stipulations of the agreement.⁶² In the Covenant Yahweh who is the Israelite nation's

60. There is an excellent synthesis in K. Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 4, Neukirchen. 1960).

61. These treaties, which are to be clearly distinguished from parity treaties concluded between equals, date from 1450-1200 B. C., and because of the close (though perhaps indirect) contact the Israelites had with Anatolia, they could easily become cognizant of the Hittite tradition. One of the basic elements of Israel's faith is, therefore, Indo-European in inspiration!

62. The documents exhibit a clear-cut structure. There is, to begin with, the preamble mentioning the name and excellence of the great king, which is followed by an historical prologue whose purpose is to recount the benevolent acts already performed by the great king on behalf of his vassals. There are, in the third place, stipulations regarding the conduct of the vassals, the most important of which is the prohibition from entering into alliances with foreign powers. Provision is also made for the depositing of the document in the principal sanctuary of the land and for its periodical reading in the presence of the people. Gods are then invoked as witnesses to the agreement, curses and blessings are uttered, the formal oath is pronounced by the vassal, and lastly there is the solemn sacrifice. The most fundamental thing in the suzerainty treaty is the sovereign's taking the initiative to do good for the vassal; the former, so to speak, deigns to become the latter's guest, and this is the basic element in pūjā!

sovereign takes the initiative and establishes a new and special bond between himself and the Israelites: he comes to them with his blessings and graces, and they on their part welcome him. In the perspectives of the Old Testament *pūjā* is man's response to God who comes to him as his guest in and through the Covenant.

There are, in the Old Testament, several passages that visualize Yahweh's presence in the midst of his people as the advent of a guest, to whom the Israelites extend a cordial welcome. Thus they offer him special sacrifices and he on his part smells their sweet odour (Gen. 8:21). We know that in ancient Israel there was the custom of offering bread to the Lord, the cakes, prepared of fine flour and numbering twelve, were known as face-bread, shew-bread, the bread of God's presence, and they were arranged on a table in two rows of six (Ex. 25:23-30). To the divine guest dwelling in their midst pious folk used to pour out libations of oil and wine, a rite which, when interpreted in terms of hospitality, will mean that the guest is anointed with the choicest oil, and a cup filled to the brim is offered to him (Ps. 23:5). The produce of the land too was brought to God: soon after the harvest farmers used to take some of the first fruits, put them in a basket and, on reaching the sanctuary, set it before the altar (Dt. 26:1-4). All this can very well be defined as the ancient Israelite version of *pūjā*, and it is also indicative of the highest form of intimacy binding the host and the guest together.

The New Testament also speaks unequivocally of God's coming to man as his guest: the Word became flesh and came to his own people (Jn. 1:11), expecting from them a cordial welcome, a welcome consisting in their acknowledgement of him as God's envoy and the harbinger of salvation. Christ who is now in glory comes together with the Father to the believer who loves him and keeps his word, and they make their home with him. The risen and glorified One stands at the gate and knocks, and if anyone hears his voice and opens the door, he will come and dine with his host (Rev. 3:26). The relationship that binds together God (Christ) and his people is, then, the one existing between guest and host; *pūjā*, in the Christian perspective, is the believers' action of welcoming God (Christ).

The Greek term that in the New Testament defines most accurately the nature of the host-guest relationship between man and God is *koinōnia* "fellowship, communion." This expression is indicative of common sharing and the highest form of intimacy, and a glance at the etymology will prove what we have said.⁶³ The feminine noun *koinōnia* is formed from the adjective *koinos* which is itself a derivative of Indo-European *kom-yos*; the first element of the compound survives in Latin *com/cum* (cf. Old Irish *com*), "with," and the second may be a derivative of *eimi*, "to go."⁶⁴ In the classical tradition of Greece *koinos* is what is common, what is shared in common, in opposition to *idios*, what is one's own, pertaining to oneself, what is personal and private. The adjective has given rise to the verb *koinōneō*, "to have in common with, have a share, take part in something with some one, so that *koinōnia* is sharing in common, partnership, fellowship, communion."⁶⁵ The full flowering of *pūjā* – the Christian's action of welcoming Christ who is standing at the door and knocks – is therefore fellowship with God in Christ.

Christians in India have incorporated the rite of *pūjā* into their own public worship; plantains, coconuts, flowers, oil, sweets, etc. are brought to the Church as offerings and deposited in the sanctuary. This external ceremony is a concrete gesture whereby the believer makes known his total giving of himself to the guest who has condescended to come into his home. God comes to us in Christ, and we give ourselves to him in Christ: this is *pūjā* in the Christian sense, and it is the supreme form of *koinōnia*.

Calvary
Trichur – 680004
Kerala

K. Luke

63 Cf. H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch I* (Indogermanische Bibliothek. II. Reihe: Wörterbücher, 2nd ed., Heidelberg, 1973) pp. 892f. J. B. Hofmann, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischer* repr. Munich, 1966) p. 151.

64 Compare Latin *comes* (from *com-i-it-*), "one who comes with, one who accompanies, companion."

65 All these nuances are implied in *yajña* as well (details in the article referred to in n. 2).

Sacramental Symbolism according to Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore of Mopsuestia (+ 428), the Exegete *par excellence* for his admirers, and "the Father of Nestorianism" for his adversaries, in his writings, especially in the *Catechetical Homilies*, speaks very elaborately on the sacramental symbolism of Baptism and Eucharist.¹ Theodore's ideas about the nature and value of the sacramental symbols are understood by some scholars as quite orthodox² and by others as partly unorthodox in the sense that following the method of literal exegesis of the Scriptures and "Nestorian" tendencies in Christology, Theodore tends to deny

1 Alphonse Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies* (abbreviated: WS), Vol. V, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*; Vol. VI, *Commentary... on the Lord's prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1932, 1933); Raymond Tonneau in collaboration with Robert Devreesse, *Les Homélies Catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste*, Studi e Testi 145 (abbr. ST 145), (Città del Vaticano, 1949); J M Vosté, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Joannis Apostoli* (Textus et Versio), CSCO, Script. Syr., Ser IV, t. III (Louvain, 1940); A. Rücker, *Ritus Baptismi et Missae quem descripsit Theodorus Episcopus Mopsuestenus in Sermonibus Cateheticis*, (Opuscula et Textus), Series Liturgica II (Münster, 1933). The quotations from Theodore's works in English translation, unless otherwise mentioned, are taken from WS.

2 R. Devreesse, "Introduction" in ST 145, pp. xxvii-xxxix; Francis Reine, *The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catechesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1942); Rowan A Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia, Exegete and Theologian* (Westminster SWI: The Faith Press, 1961), pp. 66-132; Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Liturgical Studies III (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956).

the objective reality of the sacramental symbols³. In the following lines, mainly based on his *Catechetical Homilies on Baptism* his ideas are surveyed regarding the nature and objective value of the sacramental symbols.

Theodore's definition of a sacrament

It may be good to start this study with the help of Theodore's definition of the sacraments. In the beginning of the *Homilies on Baptism* we find a definition of a sacrament: "Every sacrament is an indication of invisible and unspeakable things through signs and symbols. Such things require revelation and interpretation for the sake of the person who draws nigh unto the sacrament so that he might know its power. If it consisted only of the (visible) elements themselves, words would have been useless, as sight itself would have been able to show us one by one all the happenings that take place, but since a sacrament contains signs of things that take place or have already taken place, words are needed to explain the power of signs and mysteries".⁴

In the above definition of the sacrament there are some expressions which draw our attention. The term "indication" stands for the Syriac word, *suwd'a*; it means, "symbol," "sign". The translation of this term as "representation", and its German translation by O. Casel as "Vergegenwärtigung" has been objected to by scholars.⁵ Hence the definition merely states that a sacrament is the indication of invisible and ineffable things through signs and symbols. The meaning of the expression, "invisible and ineffable things" has been given different interpretations. R. Devreesse interprets the "invisible and ineffable things" as the actions of Christ in history.⁶ There are many places in Theodore's

3 Wilhelm de Vries, "Der 'Nestorianismus' Theodors von Mopsuestia in seiner Sakramentenlehre," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* VII (1941), pp. 91-148.

4 The translation is mine; cf. WS VI, p. 17; ST 145, p. 325, Hom XII § 2

5 W. de Vries, "Der 'Nestorianismus,'" *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* VII (1941), pp. 114f.

6 St 145, "Introduction," p. xxviii

homilies where we find support for this view. Theodore says: "It is indeed evident to us, according to the words of the Apostle, that when we perform either baptism or the Eucharist we perform them in remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ, in order that the hope of the latter may be strengthened in us." So far as the resurrection of Christ is concerned he has said: 'So many of us were baptized into Christ Jesus, were buried with him by baptism into death: as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also shall walk in newness of life' (Rom 6: 3-4). He clearly taught us here that we are baptized so that we might imitate in ourselves the death and the resurrection of our Lord, and that we might receive from our remembrance of the happenings that took place the confirmation of our hope in future things."⁷ This passage refers to the remembrance of the events of salvation history in sacraments, and to the hope which is engendered through this act.

R. Greer says that the expression, "invisible and ineffable things", in the definition of the sacrament, has to be understood in the context of Theodore's doctrine of Two Ages⁸. He quotes the following passage to show how Theodore tends to set his definition of a sacrament in the context of the Two Ages: "We wait here in faith until we ascend into heaven and set out on our journey to our Lord, where we shall look at him face to face. These things, however, we expect to receive in reality through the resurrection at the time decreed by God, and now it is only by faith that we draw nigh unto the first fruits of these good things: to Christ our Lord and the high priest of things that belong to us. We are ordered to perform in this world the symbols and signs of the future things so that, through the service of the Sacrament, we may be like men who enjoy symbolically the happiness of the heavenly benefits, and thus acquire a sense of possession and strong hope of things for which we look".⁹ According to Greer this "symbolic enjoyment" of the future involves a real participation in that future. The "symbol" makes present the future, and participates in its reality¹⁰. This aspect of

7 WS VI, p. 20; ST 145, p. 333, Hom XII § 7

8 R. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, pp. 78f.

9 WS VI, VI, p. 82; ST 145, p. 493, Hon XI § 18

10 R. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, p. 79

the future effects of the sacraments is one which is stressed very much by Theodore¹¹ in addition to their past, and present aspects as we shall see presently.

Although Theodore stresses very much "the symbolic enjoyment in the future" as the effect of sacraments, he does not deny their fruits here and now¹². In fact his arguments regarding the nature of these fruits are based on the teachings of St. Paul, and are very remarkable in their insights. He says: "If you say that the greatness of the symbols and of the signs is in the visible water, it would be an unimportant affair, as this has already happened before, but because this second birth, which you receive now sacramentally as the symbol of an earnest, is accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit, great is the Sacrament which is performed and awe-inspiring and worthy of credence is the virtue of the symbols, which will also without doubt grant us to participate in the future benefits. We expect to delight in these benefits because as an earnest of them we have now obtained also the gift of performing this Sacrament. This is the reason why the blessed Paul said: "In whom we believed and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance unto the praise of His glory"¹³. He calls here the Spirit of promise the grace which is vouchsafed unto us by the Holy Spirit, as we receive it in the promise of future benefits, and he calls it the earnest of our inheritance because from it we become partakers of future benefits.

"He (St Paul) said, therefore, in another passage. 'God has established us with you in Christ and anointed us and sealed us and given the earnest of His Spirit in our hearts' (2 Cor 1: 21-22). And again he said in another passage: "And not only they but ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption of children unto the redemption of our bodies' (Rom 8:23). He uses the words 'firstfruits of the Spirit which we have here' to imply that, when we shall dwell in the joy of the realities, we shall receive all the grace, and by the words 'we wait for the adoption of children, unto the redemption of our bodies' he shows that

11 Cf. ST 145, Hom VI § 12-13; XIII § 14; XIV § 2

13 Eph 1: 13-14

here we only receive the symbol of the adoption of children but that thereafter, having been born afresh, risen from the dead, become also immortal and incorruptible, and received complete abolition of pains from our bodies, we shall receive the real adoption. He clearly calls "redemption of our bodies" the assumption of incorruptibility and immortality, because it is through it that a complete abolition of calamities from our bodies is effected. The power of the holy baptism consists in this: it implants in you the hope of future benefits, enables you to participate in the things which we expect, and by means of the symbols and signs of the future good things, it makes the gift of the Holy Spirit the first fruits of whom you receive when you are baptized"¹⁴. From this quotation from Theodore's homily on baptism we can very well see that he speaks very clearly about the present effects of the sacrament as the first fruits of the Holy Spirit.

So sacraments, according to Theodore, have a threefold symbolism. They are related to the events of salvation history as the remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ. They are related to the future blessings by making us enjoy symbolically the happiness of heavenly benefits and acquire a strong hope of future things. Moreover, at present, they give not only the hope, but also the pledge of future blessings.

Sacramental symbolism in the homilies on Baptism

Theodore's Catechetical Homilies, especially those on Baptism and Eucharist help us very much to understand his thought regarding the nature and value of sacramental symbols. Since his explanation of the various ceremonies has been the object of different studies, a detailed survey of all the symbols is not necessary. Here the problems posed by his method of exegesis and approach to Christology in the context of the symbols of the baptismal liturgy are considered.

Enrolment, exorcism, renunciation and engagement

The first part of the baptismal rite commented on by Theodore has the following elements: Enrolment, exorcism, re-

14 WS VI, pp. 52-54; ST 145, pp. 415-417, Hom XIV §6-7

nunciation and engagement with Christ. Enrolment is the ceremony of recording the names of the candidates of baptism in a special register. Theodore depicts this ceremony in terms of a lawsuit to obtain legal title to a possession; the enemy who had also possessed it, lays claim to it. In order to obtain the legal title the case is presented before the judge. Similarly, in order to possess the title of immortality and immutability, as is suitable to dwellers in heaven and members of the Church, who is the symbol of heavenly things, one has to get for oneself a judgement against the Tyrant: "In this same way God placed the kingdom of heaven before men, and willed that all of them should be in it in an immortal and immutable state, as is suitable to the dwellers in heaven, and granted to the Church to be the symbol of heavenly things in this world, and we pray and implore Him to draw us nigh through baptism unto that heavenly city, and to make us participate in its life; but it is necessary that a judgement should be given for us against the Tyrant, who is fighting the case against us, that is to say Satan, who is always envious of our deliverance and salvation"¹⁵.

Theodore says that the judgement had already been pronounced against the tyrant, when God raised Christ our Lord from the dead and made Him immortal and immutable. But its appropriation by the candidates of baptism is symbolized through the rite of enrolment. "... He who is truly our Creator and our Lord... was pleased to make manifest a providence consonant with the works which He himself had made and which were now perishing through the wickedness of the Tyrant, in order that He might not permit him to harm us till the end. He also abolished our sins and our transgression against Him, and wished by His grace to straighten our affairs. For this He took one of us, and in Him made the beginning of all our good things, and permitted Him to receive the impact of all the trials of the wickedness of Satan,... He (Satan) brought forward all his subtle arguments (against Him) and did not cease from inflicting injuries, from beginning to end and finally, inspite of the fact that he found not a single just cause against Him, brought an unjust death upon Him... God, however, who was listening to all the story, after having heard the things that were said by both sides, con-

15 WS VI, p. 27; SG 145, pp. 349ff, Hom XII § 17-18

demned the Tyrant... and pronounced judgement against Him, while He raised Christ our Lord from the dead, and made Him immortal and immutable, and took Him up to heaven"¹⁶.

In the above analogy of the lawsuit against the tyrant Theodore moves from the rite of enrolment of the candidates to Christ's triumphant resurrection which makes here and now the victory possible for them by their being enrolled as members of the Church.

Another ceremony which Theodore explains is Exorcism which is the dramatic expression of freeing the candidate from the power of the devil. Following the Scriptures and the Fathers he mentions the importance of the battle against Satan in sacred history and in the mystery of Christ, finds its liturgical expression also in the Exorcism and stresses its appropriateness at the beginning of the baptismal rite.

Patristic sources give much attention to the dress and demeanour of the candidates for baptism during the ceremony of exorcism. According to Theodore, they stand barefoot, with hands stretched towards heaven, and naked, wearing a sack cloth. He gives a twofold symbolism to the wearing of the sack cloth. The first is penitential. The sack cloth reminds the candidate of sin, his own and those of his ancestors, which have reduced him to the present state of wretchedness, and so this ceremony is designed to instil repentance in him. In the second place it refers to the effect of sin: corruption and death. The sack cloth appears as a figure of the "garments of skin" with which Adam was clothed after the fall, signifying his degradation, whereas the candidate for baptism wears the sack cloth to show his contempt for sin and all that is connected with it¹⁷.

The renunciation and the engagement with Christ, which are complementary to the ceremony of exorcism, are the formal liturgical expressions of the "conversion of the" candidates from sin and service of Satan to the loyal service of Christ in a truly Christian life. Theodore explains the meaning of the formula, "I

16 WS VI, pp. 28-29: ST 145, pp. 353ff, Hom XII §20

17 WS VI, p. 32; ST 145, p. 361, Hom XII §25

abjure Satan and all his angels, and all his works, and all his services, and all his deception, and all his worldly glamour, and I engage myself and believe, and am baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"¹⁸. The words, "I abjure Satan" imply both "the present separation from Satan and the former association with him".¹⁹ The words, "and his angels" refer to those who were once subjected to Satan and who are made tools of his iniquity, and are employed to cause others to stumble. Theodore includes the heretics like Mani, Marcion, and Valentianus among the angels of Satan. "Service of Satan" which is another expression in the formula of renunciation, "is everything dealing with Paganism, not only sacrifices and the worship of idols and all the ceremonies involved in their service, but also things that have their beginning in it".²⁰ "All his deception" refers, according to Theodore, to "all the things that were done by pagans, under the name of doctrine, because they displayed all of them ostentatiously and performed them with the intention of fascinating the spectators and deceiving the others. He admits that most of these things of the pagans have disappeared but have reappeared in other forms through the heretics. The words, "and all his worldly glamour, refer to "the theatre, the circus, the racecourse, the contests of the athletes, the profane songs, the water organs and the dances, which the Devil introduced into this world under the pretext of amusement, and through which he leads souls of man to perdition"²¹. By abjuring all these things the candidate means to say that he rejects Satan "for always, and not to make requests to him nor be pleased to associate (himself) with him any more"²².

When the candidate adds the words, "I engage myself before God and I believe, "he shows that he will remain steadfastly with Him, that he will henceforth be unshakably with him, and that he will never separate himself from Him. His words also express his faith, an essential pre-requisite for baptism.

18 WS VI, p. 37; ST 145, p. 373, Hom XIII § 5

19 WS VI, p. 38; ST 145, p. 375, Hom XIII § 5

20 WI VI, p. 41; ST 145, p. 384, Hom. XIII § 10

21 WS VI, p. 43; ST 145, p. 389, Hom XIII § 12

22 WS VI, p. 44; ST 145, p. 391, Hom XIII § 13

The posture in which the renunciation and the promises are made have their significance. It is made "...while your knee is bowed to the ground both as a sign of adoration which is due from you to God, and as a manifestation of your ancient fall to the ground; the rest of your body is erect and looks upward towards heaven, and your hands are outstretched in the guise of one who prays so that you may be seen to worship the God who is in heaven, from whom you expect to rise from your ancient fall".²³

After the renunciation and the promises, the priest, clad in a robe of clean and radiant linen, approaches the candidate for baptism and signs him on his forehead with the oil of anointing and says, "So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Theodore comments on the significance of the garments of the priest and on the meaning of the signing. The joyful appearance owing to the radiant garments of the priest "denotes the joy of the world to which you (the candidates of baptism) will move in the future, and the shining colour (of the garments) designates your own radiance in the life to come, while the cleanness indicates the ease and the happiness of the next world".²⁴

The signing is explained as the rite by which the candidates of baptism are stamped as the lambs of Christ and as soldiers of the heavenly kingdom. The mark is made on the forehead as a sign of confidence: "...we are rightly stamped in a place that is higher than our face, so that from far we may frighten the demons, who will not then be able to come near us and injure us, and so that we may look at Him with an open face, and display before Him the stamp by which we are seen to be members of the household and soldiers of Christ our Lord".²⁵

The ceremony of signing separates the candidate of baptism from the rest, and makes him a soldier of the true king and a citizen of heaven. The sign with which he has been signed demonstrates that he has communion with all Christian activities and

23 WS VI, p. 45; ST 145, p. 395, Hom XIII § 16

24 *Ibid*

25 WS VI, pp. 46-47; ST 145, pp. 397-399, Hom XIII § J8

participation in them. It may be noted that Theodore is not only speaking of the future participation but also the present one.

After the ceremony of signing, the godfather spreads an *orarium* of linen on the crown of the candidate's head, raises him and makes him stand erect. Theodore explains the meaning of these ceremonies this way: "By your rising from your genuflection you show that you have no more communion with earth and earthly things, that your adoration and prayer to God have been accepted, that you have received the stamp which is the sign of of your election to the ineffable military service, that you have been called to heaven, and that you ought henceforth to direct your course to its life and citizenship while spurning all earthly things. The linen which he spreads on the crown of your head denotes the freedom to which you have been called. You were before standing bareheaded, as this is the habit of the exiles and the slaves, but after you have been signed he (God) throws on your head linen, which is the emblem of the freedom to which you have been called,"²⁶

Hallowing of the baptismal font, anointing, baptism, and signing

After the ceremony of exorcism and its connected rites, the candidates draw near for holy baptism, and take off their garments, which are "a sign of mortality".²⁷ Then they are anointed all over their body with the oil of anointing reciting the formula, "So-and-so is anointed in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"²⁸ This anointing is considered a sign of the garment of immortality which the candidates will put on through baptism. Theodore also adds that this is also the sign of the garment of immortality which will be put on at the time of resurrection: "And you are anointed all over your body as a sign that unlike the covering used as a garment, which does not always cover all the parts of the body, because although it may cover all the external limbs, it by no means covers the internal ones — all our nature will put on immortality at the time of resurrection, and all that is seen in us, whether internal,

26 WS VI, p. 47; ST 145, pp. 399-401, Hom XIII § 19

27 WS VI, p. 54; ST 145, p. 419, Hom XIV § 8

28 WS VI *loc. cit.*; ST 145, *loc. cit.*

or external, will undoubtedly be changed into incorruptibility according to the working of the Holy Spirit which shall then be with us"²⁹

After the anointing, the candidates descend into the water which has been consecrated by the priest. In explaining this part Theodore stresses the fact that the nature of water does not possess the various effects of baptism, and so it requires consecration: "It is owing to the fact that the nature of water does not possess all these attributes, which are implanted in it at our immersion by the working of the Holy Spirit, that the priest makes use beforehand of his priestly service and of clear words and benedictions, written for the purpose, and prays that the grace of the Holy Spirit come upon the water and prepare it with His holy and awe-inspiring presence for the task of performing all these things, so that it may become a reverential womb for the second birth, and so that those who descend into it may be fashioned afresh by the grace of the Holy Spirit and born again into a new and virtuous human nature".³⁰

In connection with the candidate's descent into water Theodore explains various symbolisms of baptismal water. It is considered "a furnace where you (the candidate of baptism) will be renewed and refashioned in order that you may move to a higher nature, after having cast away your old mortality and fully assumed an immortal and incorruptible nature".³¹ The use of water in baptism reminds us also of its use in the first creation of man: "These things dealing with birth happen to you in the water, because you were fashioned at the beginning from earth and water, and having fallen later into sin you assumed a thorough corruption through the sentence of death".³² Theodore also recalls how the potters with the help of water refashion vessels which are damaged.

After speaking about the various symbolisms of water he refers to various aspects of the baptismal formula, "So-and-so

29 *Ibid.*

30 WS VI, p. 56; ST 145, p. 425, Hom XIV § 10

31 WS VI. *loc. cit.*; ST 145, p. 425, Hom XIV § 11

32 *Ibid.*

is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This formula in the "passive, common in the Eastern Churches, shows 'that all the cause of the good things is in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, an eternal nature and cause of everything, by which we were erected at the beginning, and expect now to be renewed'.³³ The priest is only a servant in all the things that take place.

In explaining the power of the invocation of the name of the Trinity, Theodore refers to instances from both the Old Testament and the New (vide Is 26: 13; Acts 3: 6), where the power of the name is manifested.

Theodore explains the symbolism of three identical immersions at baptism this way: "... your immersions are done in an identical way in order that you may know that each one of those names is equally perfect and able to confer the benefits of baptism".³⁴

At the end of the explanations of the formula of baptism he summarises the effects of baptism: "You receive, therefore, the grace of the adoption of children in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and you go out of the water. You have now received baptism which is the second birth; you have fulfilled by your baptism in water the rite of burial, and you have received the sign of the resurrection by your rising out of the water; you have been born and have become a new man; you are no more part of Adam who was mutable and burdened and made wretched by sin, but of Christ who was completely freed from sin through resurrection, while even before it He never drew nigh unto it. It was congruous that (this sinless state) should have had its beginning in Him before (His resurrection), and that at His resurrection He should receive an immutable nature. In this way He confirmed to us the resurrection from the dead and our participation in incorruptibility".³⁵

After baptism, the newly baptized put on a garment which was wholly radiant. Theodore explains this rite as denoting the

33 WS VI, p. 59; ST 145, p. 431, Hom XIV § 14

34 WS VI, p. 63; ST 145, p. 443, Hom XIV § 20

35 WS VI, p. 67; ST 145, p. 455, Hom XIV § 25

next world which is shining and radiant, and the life into which one has already entered through symbols. He then goes on to distinguish between the real garment of immortality and incorruptibility which the baptized will receive in resurrection and the immortality and incorruptibility which they receive sacramentally and symbolically. This way of expressing his comment is perhaps confusing as regards Theodore's view of the reality of the sacramental effects.

After the ceremony the priest signs the baptized on the forehead and says, "So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father,..." Theodore compares this rite to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ after his baptism in the Jordan, and says that the Holy Spirit has descended on the baptized and they have been anointed and have received grace.

After explaining the meaning of the important ceremonies of baptism he speaks of the Eucharist as the food of immortality with which the baptized will be nourished. He devotes a few homilies to explaining the nature of the Eucharistic mystery.

From the above survey of Theodore's explanations of the sign and symbols of the baptismal liturgy, we notice that he gives great importance to the symbols. In the total context of his explanations he considers these symbols as having a threefold relationship. They are related to the salvific actions of the death and resurrection of Christ; they give an earnest of immortality and immutability here and now; they engender the hope of future benefits. However, here and there, while emphasizing the fact that the full reality of the symbols expressed in the liturgy will be realized only after the resurrection, he seems to forget to say what he has elsewhere said: that the first fruits of the future benefits are already conferred here and now. Theodore's explanations on the sacraments give very deep insights into the nature and value of the sacramental symbols.

The Female Aspect of the Deity in the Religious Worship of India

Introduction

Religious belief and divine worship have been marked by a special emphasis on the feminine aspects with special significance. This can be proved, in a special way, from the study of the History of Religions. The emphasis on the feminine aspect even in the divine worship is the result of deep understanding of the duality of the male and female principles in the generative process. There are reasons to believe that even in Palaeolithic cults the emphasis on the female principle was not unknown.¹ The attribution of importance to the feminine principle in divinity has its roots in the reality of life in which offspring are born only from the cooperation of the male and female principles.

When the religiosity of man began to individualize divinity the feminine aspect of divine life began to develop in the human mind in a special way with life-giving properties. Thus the maternal aspect of the mystery of birth and propagation gave rise to the cult of the Mother-goddess.² From the time of this acknowledgement of the maternal principle in religious worship of human history, the cult began to be centred around a single goddess with different functions, or a number of independant and separate deities exercising their diversified roles in the process of birth, generation and fertility.

As we go back through the history of religious beliefs it seems clear that the importance of the female god-principle had its origin in Western Asia and South Eastern Europe. If the 'Magdalenians of the Palaeolithic age concentrated upon maintaining the vagaries of the chase as the chief source of their food-supply,

1. James E. O., *The Cult of the Mother-Goddess*, N. Y. 1959 p. 16

2. *Ibid.* p. 20

their Gravettian and Aurignacian predecessors, were interested essentially, it would seem, in the maternal aspect of the mystery of birth and propagation. Their cradle-land appears to have been in the region of the Caspian Sea, where the goddess cult subsequently became most prominent. It is here that its most probable original home lies.³ Woman being the mother of the race was considered to be the essential life-giving principle. The role and significance of paternity was less obvious and since the part of the fatherhood in procreation was less understood, it was naturally the mother whose role was quite evident, female sexual organs became life-giving symbols. This is the foundation for attributing divine characteristics to the female which led to the goddess cult. Once this role and idea of personification have been accepted in the female principle it is easy to understand how different functions were attributed to different female deities.

India and the worship of female deities

When we concentrate our attention on Indian civilization and the goddess cult there we find ample sources for investigation. The archaeological findings of Western India, especially in Baluchistan where we are taken back to a stage prior to that of Indus Valley civilization, have their contribution to make in this regard. Together with pottery and architectural findings of the Kulli culture of Baluchistan⁴ a number of clay female figures adorned with necklaces have been excavated. Since they are uniform in nature Sir Aurel Stein thinks that they "might have been intended to represent some tutelary goddess."⁵

But according to S. Piggot they represent a grim embodiment of the Mother goddess who is also the guardian of the dead - an underworld deity concerned alike with the crops and the seed corn buried beneath the earth."⁶

The Indus Valley civilization and the goddess cult

The Indus Valley civilization findings of Mohanjodaro and Harrappa have much to suggest about this goddess cult of

3, Ibid. p. 20

4. Piggot S., Prehistoric India, 1950, p. 72 ff.

5. Stein A., Memoirs of Arch. Survey of India, 1925, p. 60

6. Piggot S., op. cit. p. 127

pre-historic India. In Harrappa and Mohanjodaro most of the female statues are well ornamented but nude except for a small skirt. Black stains on the panniers which might have been made by smoke, have led Dr. Mackay to conjecture that these were used sometimes as small lamps in the practice of a cult connected with the Mother goddess, of whom the statues, he thinks, were an image.⁷

Sir John Marshall who has done extensive study in this matter affirms this view and holds that these sacred images represented a goddess with attributes very similar to those of the great Mother goddess, "The Lady of Heaven", and a special patroness of women.⁸

Comparing the different civilizations of the world Chanda has the following remark to make:

"There is a large body of evidence to show that the Semites before their separation passed through a matriarchal stage of society. The tribe was a group of people inhabiting a particular oasis in the desert. It was made up of mothers and their brothers and children. The fathers were men of other tribes, dwelling in other oases, who contracted only temporary unions with the mothers. Descent was traced through the mother, and she was the head of the clan in peace and war. In such a society the chief deity of the tribe must have been conceived as a counterpart of the human matriarch. Male divinities might exist and be known as 'maternal uncle', but they would not be called father, and would play so unimportant a part that they would survive only sporadically in later religion".⁹

Although it is not clear that this ancient matriarchal divinity cult had any influence on Indian religious history, as Chanda thinks,

7. Quoted in James E. O., op. cit. p. 33

8, Marshall Sir John, Mohanjodaro and the Indus Valley Civilization, Vol. I, p. 339

9. Chanda, as quoted in D. Chattopadhyaya in Lokayata, New Delhi, 1959, p. 242

it gives us a clue as to how the female divinity might have developed even in the Indus Valley civilization. The predominance of female figures and symbols at the earliest levels of culture suggests that the attention of religious thinking was more concentrated on the feminine and maternal aspects of the process of generation, in spite of the fact that these were personified as a virgin or the Great Mother goddess or goddesses. The fact that the female personifications were not accompanied by a consort or male figure leads to the conjecture that their function was to promote fecundity in its several aspects and attributes to guard the 'sacred Portal through which life entered the world,' and also to express the care and vivification of the dead.

From the excavations of Mohanjodaro it has also become clear¹⁰ that this idea of a Mother goddess was a strong feature of Indian civilization."

"For in no country in the world has the worship of the divine mother been from time immemorial so deep rooted and ubiquitous as in India. Her shrines are found in every town and hamlet throughout the length and breadth of the land."¹¹

Therefore it is easy to conclude that in Mohanjodaro and Harrappa culture the female aspect of the deity was important as part of a religious cult. This stress, as we have seen, or the aspect of femininity in godhead was the result of deep faith in the mystery of birth and propagation.

As regards the two races of Indian culture, while the Pre-Aryans gave the supreme position to the great Mother goddess, the Aryans always gave that status only to male gods. They gave female deities only a subordinate status. This was true even with regard to Prithivi - the great Earth goddess who can act only in conjunction with the Sky God.

Mother right and the female principle in the religious belief

Mother-right has been defined as

"a form of social organization in which the rights of a person in relation to the other members of

10. Marshall Sir John, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 57

11. Ibid 51

his community and to the community as a whole are determined by the relationship traced through the mother. In this condition the duties which a person owes to society, the privileges which he enjoys and the restrictions to which he is subject are regulated and their scope is determined, by the relations in which the person stands to his mother's relatives and his mother's social group".¹²

Strictly speaking this form of mother-right has been found only in the area of Assam, where the social superiority of the female with her supremely important function of "rearing the young and also imparting to them whatever could be characterised as human heritage at this stage", In other parts of India it is more vague and mitigated. This social supremacy of sex is always related to the development of the economic life of the society. D. Chattopadhyaya observes:

The original pre-hunting stage was characterised by mother-right. With the development of hunting, however, the social supremacy was shifted to the male. In the post-hunting stage, among those peoples that developed the pastoral economy this male supremacy came to exercise even greater hold; among those, however, that discovered agriculture, the situation was reversed. There was a revival of mother-right among them. With the further development of agriculture, more especially with the introduction of the cattle-drawn plough to the field - this agricultural mother-right was finally overthrown.

Gods and goddesses are after all created in the human image; these shifts in the social importance of the sexes were naturally reflected in the form of parallel shifts in the celestial sphere. Deities representing the hunting and the pastoral stages are predominantly male whereas those representing the earlier stages of agriculture were predominantly female.¹³

12. Rivers, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII p. 851

13. D: Chattopadhyaya op. cit. p. 241-2

In this connection we must also remember that since agriculture was considered to be the invention of women¹⁴ and since it served as the main source of livelihood at least until hunting developed, women enjoyed their superiority in society as well as in the religious field. As this female-dominated cultural economy began to fade and give way to pastoral economy in the Vedic period the importance of sex also was altered even in religious thinking.

Goddesses occupy a very subordinate position in Vedic belief and worship. They play hardly any part as rulers of the world. The only one of any importance is Usas who judged by the statistical standard ranks as a deity of the third class. But unlike nearly all the gods, she received no share in the soma offering. Next to her comes Sarasvati, who, however, only ranks with the lowest class of deities. A few other goddesses are praised in one hymn each. Prithivi, hardly separable from Dyaus, is praised in one short hymn of three stanzas. Ratri (night) is also invoked in one hymn. Like her sister Dawn, she is called the daughter of heaven... Vak (personified speech) is celebrated in one hymn.....

Goddesses as wives of the great gods similarly play an insignificant part in the Veda. They are altogether without independent character, simply representing the spouses whom such gods as Indra must have had. Hardly anything about them is mentioned but their names, which are simply formed from those of the gods with the feminine suffix -ani.¹⁵

Here again we do not ignore the fact that in Vedic literature when agriculture is referred female deities are called upon for patronage and good yielding and harvest.¹⁶ But all of them are subordinate to male gods like Indra.

14. Ibid. p. 251

15. Macdonell, as quoted by Chattopadhyaya o. p. cit, p. 243-4

16. Rig Veda, iv, 6-7

One of the most recognised and ancient religious trends in India is Saktism which is also known as Tantrism. It has its origin from the cult of the Mother goddess and it is also connected with Siva. The underlying principle of Saktism is a sexual dualism which has its imaginative foundation in the procreation of living beings. The primitive mother-worship or the position of the goddess was intelligently typified as a female energy or a female productive principle known as Prakrithi who in conjunction with the male principle Purusha, became the great creator-mother of the universe (*Jaganmata* or *Jagatamma*). In Saktism this female principle in her supreme form, became known as Mahadevi consort of Siva, a prominent male god. At the same time she is conceived of as the creator of Siva and other divinities such as Brahma, Vishnu etc... In Saktism she enjoyed, just like Siva, the power of creation and destruction. She was the womb from which all things and living beings came, and to which all return. She is also the mysterious force behind all appetite and passion.

Personification of female deities

The caste system and division of society seem to have appeared only in the fifth century B. C. under the influence of Aryan rulers, and the mystic Brahmanism sped on its rapid progress, but the goddess cult all the time, had made steady progress in a combined effort of Aryans and pre-Aryans in spite of their divisive elements. The Dravidians throughout their rapid movement and spreading to the south kept and encouraged the worship of the Mother Earth and her male counter part, giving them great importance in their religious, social and economic life of the community. On the other hand the Aryans had their devotional tribute to their Sky-god, Dyaus Pitar, usually connected with Prithivi Mata, the Earth goddess, as the Universal Parents. But the difference lay in this: while the Aryans personified the material heavens and Earth the Dravidians stressed the fundamental forces of fertility and fecundity upon which all life depended.

In this connection it is particularly important to note how this female energy attributed to divine power was practically observed by the people at different levels. It is also to be noted

that the union of a god with a goddess always symbolised 'the sources of reproduction in which male and female were united and became symbols of a single divine power with male and female aspects. The two aspects, one active and the other passive, are unified usually in a single divine force. The female aspect of divine energy (*śakti*) is personified as the wife, inseparable from the god and joining with him in the process of creation as well as in the destruction of the phenomenal universe. As we have seen, the Mother goddess cult has its manifestation as *Sakti* in the form of *Prakṛiti* in union with the male principle, *Puruṣa*. It is in this way that most of the personifications in Indian Civilization have been adopted. We shall now examine some of the main female personified deities.

The consorts of Siva

Siva being the creator of everything makes mysteriously his consort from the female side of his own nature, and having the female force beside him creates everything. This has been typically symbolised in the traditional emblem of Siva, viz. the *Linga* which is a phallic¹⁷ expression of the male generative organ. In the Indus Valley civilization this *linga* was shown associated with *Yoni* rings representing the union of the male and the female. He was, thus a fertility-god. Even today there is the cult of *Sivalinga* which is the symbol of a "supreme being as the Ultimate Reality of evolution and involution of the Universe".¹⁸ As Sir John Marshall points out in his observations on the Indus Valley civilization¹⁹ this has an unmistakable relation to goddess cult both now as well as in prehistoric times. In later developments Siva is considered to be a combined form of Agni and Rudra.²⁰ As a symbol and source of life he is identified with the process of reproduction in all its forms and aspects, as creative energy in the cycles of birth and death and rebirth.²¹ The female counterpart of Siva is shown vividly in all religious tradition.

17. The Cultural Heritage of India, Calcutta, 1962 Vol. IV, p. 67

18. James, E. O., op. cit. p. 103

19. Marshall, op. cit. Vol. I, p. vii

20. Cultural Heritage of India Vol. II, p. 73

21. James, op. cit. p. 103

Female deities such as Uma, Ambika, Parvati, Kali, etc. are different personifications of his female sakti in relation to different functions of creativity. Weber's words as quoted by N. Sastri in the *Cultural Heritage of India* is worthy of note. "As in Siva, first of all two gods, Agni and Rudra, are combined, so too his wife is to be regarded as a compound of several divine forms, and this becomes quite evident if we look over the mass of her epithets. While one set of these, as Uma, Ambika, Parvati, Haimavati, belongs to the wife of Rudra, others as Kali, Karali, carry us back to the wife of Agni, while Gauri and others perhaps refer to Nirrti, the goddess of all evil."²²

Uma (light), the wife of Siva, was a "syncretistic goddess of nature and fertility" in the beginning. She gradually developed into his female counterpart becoming the feminine side of his character. In her northern cradleland she was a mountain goddess, Parvati. As the Vedas bring Uma into relationship with Agni, she becomes capable of making women conceive and of causing all the fruits of the earth to spring up and grow.²³ Thus she becomes the female expression of the nature of both Agni and Siva, creative and destructive, and assumes the status of the giver of life seated in her temple on the summit of a mountain adored by Siva, Agni Vishnu, Brahma and Indra with Surya and Chandra in their chariots above her.²⁴ In Ambika form she is 'the good mother' playing the familiar role of the sister of the god of fertility. In her terrible form she assumes the exact counter part of Siva as Kali, the goddess of death and destruction. The name Kali is alternatively used with Parvati in the long account of the wedding between Siva and Parvati. (Cfr. Vamana Purana 25-27). Hence they are same goddess with different functions.

In the Linga-purana (II. 100) Kali's association with Parvati (and by implication with Siva) is firmly and dramatically affirmed by the following myth. Once upon a time the demoness Daruka obtained such power through asceticism that she usurped the authority of the gods and began to rule the world. None of

22. Cfr. *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, p. 73.

23. *Rig Veda*,

24. James E. O. p. 105

the gods wished to fight her as she was a woman, and so they all went to Siva to ask what they should do. He in turn asked Parvati if she could save the day for them. Hearing her husband's request Parvati created from herself Kali, with matted hair, three eyes, black in complexion, of terrible appearance, and holding a trident and skull. On seeing the terrible goddess the gods fled in panic, but Kali, at Parvati's command, set out with a band of ghosts and other strange creatures, and defeated Daruka, thus saving the world for the gods. After the battle, Siva appeared as an infant in the battlefield amidst the corpses of the slain. Seeing him crying there Kali picked him up and nursed him. When this did not calm him she began to dance among the dead with her entourage of ghosts until he became delighted and calm.²⁵ In Hindu mythology Kali is the goddess not of productivity and prosperity but of death and destruction.

Sarasvati

Sarasvati is regarded as the wife of Brahma, the Supreme Creator, the source of light and life. She is very benevolent and is very submissive and subordinate to her consort. She is the goddess of wisdom and knowledge and hence is known as the mother of the Vedas. As the name signifies she was originally a river-goddess²⁶ and conferred on the waters of her river such powers as purification, immortality, the power to obtain wealth and progeny etc.²⁷

In later mythology she becomes the daughter of Brahma and, at the same time, like most female deities, his spouse under different titles. For the Bengali Vaishnavas she is one of the wives of Vishnu, but in the main tradition she is always the wife of Brahma and the "goddess of wisdom and eloquence and thus venerated as the patroness of learning and literary accomplishment", she is depicted as seated on a lotus, graceful in form and appearance and adorned with a crescent on her brow.

25. Vans Kennedy, *Researches into the Nature and Affinity of Ancient and Hindu Mythology*, London 1831, pp. 337-8

26. *Rig-veda*, vii, 36, 4-6

27. *Rig-veda*, 6, 52 ff.

Lakshmi

Lakshmi is an Aryan goddess associated with the pre-Aryan Vishnu. Popularly accepted as the goddess of beauty, wealth, pleasure and victory, she is also regarded as the goddess of corn and good harvests and is thus the goddess of productivity. According to the *Ramayana*, Lakshmi was born from a lotus on the forehead of Vishnu. According to another myth she was a precious find at the churning of the primeval ocean by the Devas and Assuras. She does not have an independent personality like Uma or Kali. On the other hand, like Sarasvati she is a goddess only according to the image of her consort, being very submissive and subordinate and benevolent. She is also the wife of Prajapati and of Dharma, the son of the god-Kam. She appears in different forms according as her spouse assumes different forms: they are Sita-Rama and Rukmini-Krishna.²⁸ When he is Vishnu she is always his wife with her usual name. As Vishnu is the preserver of all things, she is the mother of the world, eternal and imperishable. "As Vishnu was all-pervading, so she was omnipresent. He is meaning, she is speech. He is polity, she prudence. He is understanding and she intellect; he righteousness and she devotion. In a word Vishnu is all that is called male and Lakshmi all that is termed female; there is nothing else than they." Lakshmi retains her charm and beauty of character in all her various appearances in Vaishnavism as a bountiful mother, never assuming the role of the 'active virile goddess' and thus easily reaching the heart of the Bhaktas.

Prithivi

Another celebrated goddess of the ancient times was Prithivi, the Earth Mother, who has been paired with the Sky-god, Dyaus Pitar. These deities seem to have their origin from primeval cosmic waters through the god Tvashtri. Indra is said to have been born from this divine pair. Although Dyaus lost his importance later, the divine pair are described in the Vedas as the Father and mighty mother of all creatures.³⁰ The marriage

28. Vishnupurana bk. 80

29. Ibid. bk, 59

30. Rig-veda, i, 159; i-160

of heaven and earth is nothing more than the personification of cosmic maternity and paternity. According to Aithareya Brahmana (iv-27) 'the gods brought the two, heaven and earth, together and performed a wedding of the gods'. It was Mother Earth who enjoyed the focus point of the devotion in the cult.³¹ Mother Earth thus is praised as kindly, full of dwellings and rainless and as the one who gives protection to all even to the dead who go to kindly Mother Earth, the "woolsoft-like maiden".³²

Prithivi being Mother Earth being the womb of all existence, the personification cannot naturally be restricted to a single figure. All the same the main principle of fertilization is hers without exception.

Gramadevatas

As the fundamental idea of the personification of different forces in nature has been accepted as an underlying religious belief in India, the worship of the Earth Mother took different forms of expression. The different personifications were not always based on theological principles or scripture but rather on the necessity of each society at different places and times. Nevertheless the influence was widespread and appealing. Each village developed a form of mother goddess of its own, commonly known as Gramadevata, under different names. Different powers were attributed to her, (the power to ward off the influence of the evil spirits), the power to impart fertility by virtue of her life-giving Sakti, and so on. Though these female deities are often associated with male counterpart, the gods play only a very minor and passive role. The female deities are known as Mata or Amba or Amma or Ankamma etc. Their names are very often linked together with the name of the village.

The villagers offer sacrifices and perform other rites of worship to please the village goddess and obtain favours. Particular prayers and sacrifices are offered, according to the different seasons, to these village deities to ward off great epidemics such as cholera, small-pox etc. Since the character and nature of

31. Rig-veda, v-84

32. Rig-veda, i-26; i-5; x-18.

these female deities are different in different villages, and their functions very diversified according to the place in which they are venerated, it is not possible here to describe all these grama-devatas.

The Cow

In the religious history of India cows have always mysteriously retained a very high position. It is not surprising to find an overemphasis of the cow cult in a society which personifies every good and nourishing element of nature, especially if it has any relation to fertility and fecundity. But the origin and development of this cow cult still remains obscure. In later developments of Brahmanic Hinduism, Lakshmi and Parvati became equated with the divine cow as the source of life and fecundity. There are reasons to believe that cow worship had its origin in indigenous Dravidian culture. However, there is no clear evidence that it existed in the Indus Valley Civilization. There may have been bull worship at the time, the bull (Nandi) and the linga being symbols of reproduction embodied in Siva. The cow being the female counterpart of the Nandi, might have occupied a higher status in later ages. Moreover as the source of milk needed for sustenance the cow perhaps became essentially a symbol of fertility and general well-being in such a way that the prohibition of cow-killing was enjoined in Rig Veda.³³ Killing the cow, it was thought, would jeopardize fecundity at its source and bring disaster upon the productivity of the earth. This belief is current even today among many Hindus.

From what has been said it is perhaps clear that the attribution of the female principle to the different creative aspects of divinity or the attribution of godliness to the natural maternal aspects of fertility and fecundity is of very long standing in religious thinking and mythology in India. Although we are not in a position to judge the positive contribution of these conceptions to society or to the religiousness of man in relation to his ultimate salvation, they are clearly an attempt to connect the phenomenal world and its uncontrollable forces with the Ultimate and unexperienced underlying Power in a typically human way. Whatever be the philosophical basis for them or the conclusion that we draw, they have an unparalleled force in the popular Hindu religious mind.

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33. Rig-veda, vii-93, 15

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